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SINCE FIFTY

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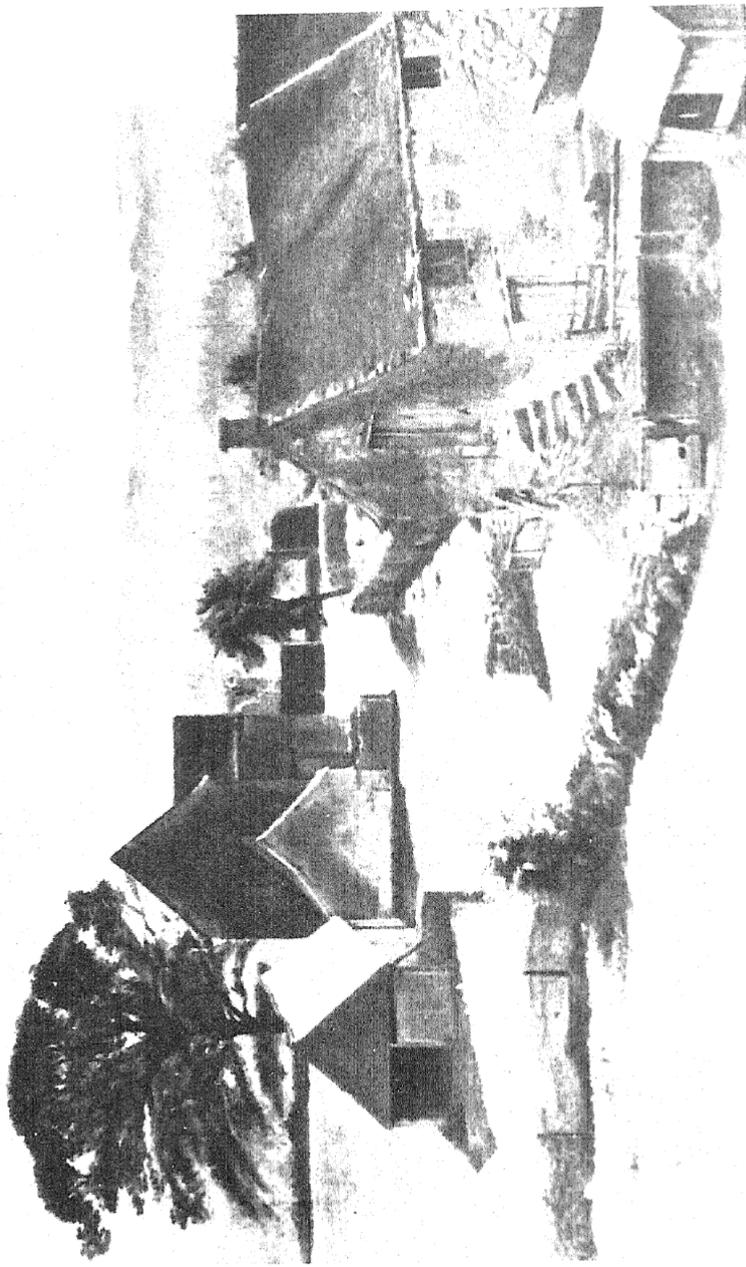
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Men and Memories, 1872-1900

Men and Memories, 1900-1922

Contemporaries

Twelve Portraits



FAR OAKRIDGE

SINCE FIFTY

Men and Memories, 1922—1938

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

* * *

Lifting the eyes would be so easy, yet it
is seldom done, and when a rapt poet
compels us to do so, we are arrested,
we are rebuked, we are delivered.

GEORGE SANTAYANA

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1940

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To
MAX BEERBOHM

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CHAPTER I

RETURN TO OAKRIDGE

IT was at the end of July 1922 that we went back, for the first time since we gave up the farmhouse two years earlier, to spend the summer at Oakridge. We had now acquired the cottage which we had heretofore leased—close quarters for our family, but with careful planning we managed to accommodate ourselves, and all were delighted to have a foothold where they had spent their early years. This cottage, too, was full of memories. Here for some four years had lived John Drinkwater and Kathleen his wife, the best of neighbours—John, the poet incarnate, generous, high-minded, enthusiastic over the work of other poets, delighting in the countryside, in his little garden, in playing host to friends in his cottage. Our children adored him. He used to play cricket, to go out fishing with them. First they must be provided with bait. This was our daughter Betty's task, for she was cunning at unearthing worms, burying a piece of meat and after a few days digging it up to find bait enough. John had a fine rod, jointed and polished, which he kept in a bag, an object of envy to the children, who had plain bamboo rods only. He could throw a fly skilfully, yet after a morning's fishing would usually return with an empty basket. He would come out gaily each morning in shorts, and a blue shirt with open collar, to fetch drinking water from the spring nearby. He made the most of life then on very small means. Here he wrote some of his best poems and his play *Lincoln*. On the day he finished *Lincoln* he came bounding out of the cottage, met the children, and danced

*Return to
Oakridge*

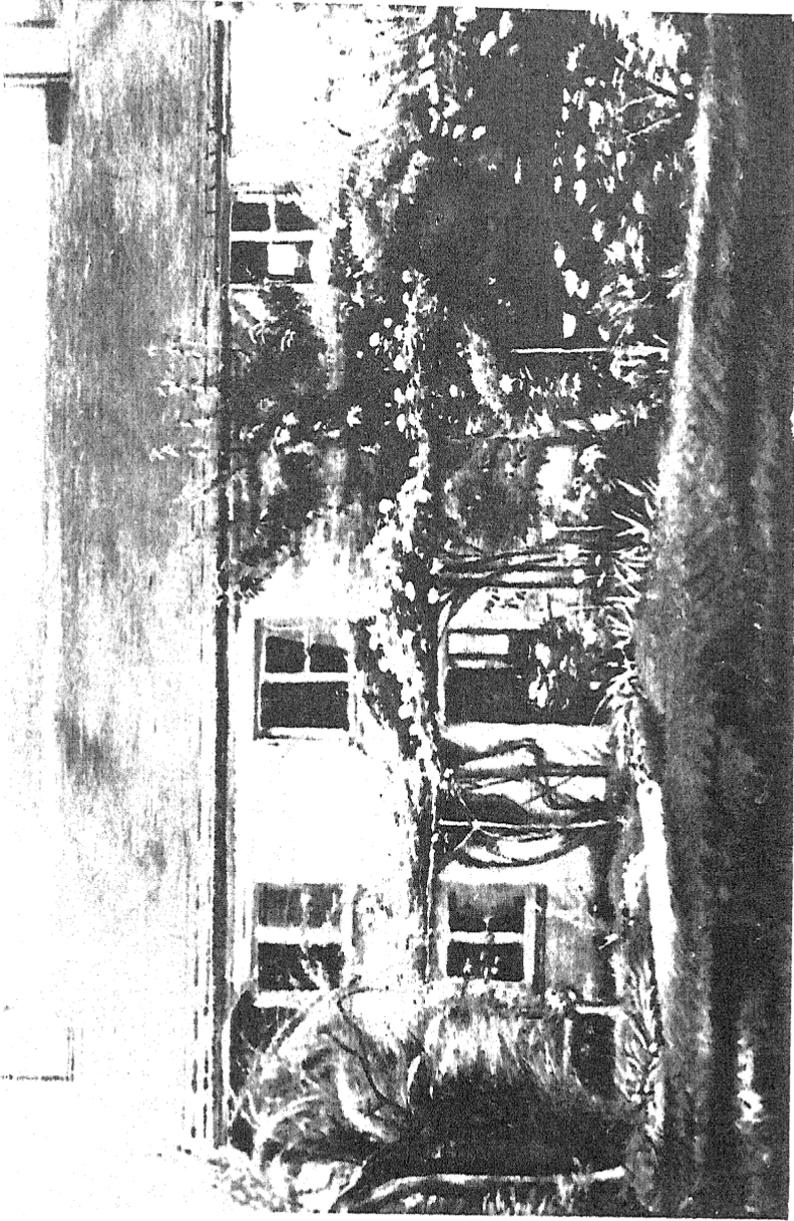
John round with them, shouting 'I've finished my play! I've
Drink- finished my play!' He read the play to us the same evening,
water and and my brother Charles, who was staying with us, was so
Max Beer- impressed by *Lincoln* that he offered, in case John found
bohm difficulty in placing his play, to take a share in backing it.
For John then had little idea of how successful *Lincoln*
was to prove.

John and Kathleen used to call our farm 'The Big House',
and John wrote, while in the cottage, a charming little poem
on Iles Farm:

Here is a time for graver tones
Than now I sing.
It shelters you; it is a pole
For thought upon your travelling;
Here dreams established are in stones,
To mark and bring
Irresolutions to control,
From truant wing.

But not of these my argument.
I celebrate,
Your hearth, your comfortable speech
Of young years and late,
Your courtesies that are content
To sow and wait,
For these as planets are to teach
My travel to your gate.

Before the Drinkwaters took the cottage, Max Beerbohm
and his wife were there for several months. Here in the little
sitting-room Max spread a green cloth on the table, laying his
paint brushes out neatly beside the few tubes of paint that
he used, strips of blotting paper and pot of crystal-clear
water. Both for his drawings and for his writings he
habitually used a ribbed paper called Wessex Antique.
(It is no longer manufactured, and he constantly mourns it.)
Here, too, at this table he began *Rossetti and his Circle*, his



JOHN DRINKWATER'S COTTAGE

series of Pre-Raphaelite drawings, wrote the story of *Maltby and Braxton* and the play *Savonarola Brown*, published in *Seven Men*. And the children laughed at the recollection of his emerging from the cottage, dressed with scrupulous care, with stick and gloves, to walk the 100 yards to the Nelson Inn to buy cigarettes; farther than this he never ventured. During the winter he was content to stay indoors with all windows carefully shut, and we remembered how, when with us, if he noticed an open window, he would stroll round the room, talking and smoking while he gradually approached the window and, as though absent-mindedly, carefully close it. Florence would go for walks with us but never far: Max must not be left alone in the cottage. One early spring day, walking with my wife, she heard a bird singing high up in the air. 'What bird is that?' asked Florence, and when told it was a lark, 'A lark! Max has never heard a lark!' and she hurried back. When she returned with Max, in heavy overcoat, gloved and attentive, alas, the lark had finished his song!

*Village
neighbours*

I spent the summer painting, barns and stone buildings chiefly, a happy change, always, from studio work. The family were pleased to renew old village acquaintances, with Mrs Wright at the post office, handsome Mrs Seth Gardiner at Waterlane, Mrs Albert George Gardiner at the Lynch, with Harry Davoll the cabinet-maker, Jim Gardiner the carrier, and Alfred Bucknell the blacksmith. Then there was Parker, our old henchman, now looking after the horses for a timber haulier. The children remembered how, when our Jersey cow, Bessy, produced a calf, and one of them ran out to ask Parker what sort of calf, he answered gravely, 'It's a little boy, miss.'

There was the village policeman, too, whose eye, when he came to the farmhouse to make some enquiries, kept wandering to a cartoon of three nude figures by Burne-Jones: 'Not that I see any 'arm in the 'uman form myself,' he said, apologetically.

Above all we had William and Eve Simmonds again as

Local farming neighbours. William has long been known to a discerning circle for his enchanting puppets; now he has won a wider public. For as a carver in wood and ivory he is a Little Master, in the old German sense. Indeed he and his wife do everything well that they set about in house, workshop and garden. For Eve, too, is an exquisite artist, an embroideress and musician. Moreover, she can bake her own bread. A loaf from her is the kindest gift I can receive. Yet her bread, she declares, is baked in the usual way, only she gets her flour from a neighbouring flour mill. What a reflection on our age, when a good loaf of white bread is rarer than the finest delicacies of the table. English butter and English cheese likewise are precious forms of food, obtainable rarely in grand hotel or simple pub.

I was struck, too, by the worsened state of the countryside hereabouts. At Bisley nearby the local landowner had died; this was during the War; since then his estate, on which were several fine farms, came under the hammer. Some of the sitting tenants bought their farms and holdings and are hard put to it to make them pay. Buildings are neglected, dry walls, too, and stone-tiled roofs are replaced with corrugated iron. Other farms near us had been bought cheaply by shrewd dealers in land, who did little or nothing to put them into reasonable repair; and their tenants, scarcely able to make a living, allowed land and buildings to deteriorate still further. I remember William Bateson was shocked when he stayed with us, at the poor farming about Oakridge, at the overgrown hedges, the weeds and thistles—the starved fields, the tumble-down walls. True, the soil was poor and stony; the more need for careful husbandry, he said. Wages were then low enough, yet the small farmers could not, or would not, afford the labour needed. Formerly, I was told, there was a man to every ten acres, now but one for a hundred acres, and in most of the fields given up to pasture were signs of furrows where corn was once grown, even in fields on the steep sides of the valley, which no one now would think of putting under the plough.

On the other side of the valley, towards Cirencester, the land, held by Lord Bathurst, is well farmed and walls and buildings are kept in repair. Here at Oakridge there has never been a squire; the four villages which comprise the parish are proud of their independence. Most of the villagers own a field or two as well as their cottages, and while they most of them look to their fences and dry walls, a few neglect them, and there is no authority to bring pressure to bear on them to do otherwise.

The country about Oakridge is purely pastoral, save along the Stroud valley where there are many factories; some of these, owing to trade leaving the district, are now derelict. Like the deserted mills in the West Riding, the mills at Toadsmore and Chalford have a strange beauty; for nature soon steals over stone and brick, giving of her poetry to man's prosaic handiwork, covering it with creepers and lichen, throwing up a profusion of growths among the flags and paths, while decay adds her own beauty to crumbling roof, falling beams and shattered framework. The mills stand silent among leaning trees by ancient millponds, their tall chimneys reflected in the water. One comes on unexpected vistas through doorless entrances and crumbling walls, while broken machinery and scattered tools, rusting in silence, tell of a once humming life.

Packed as we were in our cottage, even with rooms rented nearby, I marvelled at the way in which our country neighbours lived and brought up their families in such narrow conditions.

A. E. Housman came during the summer, walking over from Woodchester, where he stayed, I think, with a relation. In the country he wore no wideawake, no loose collar such as suited John Drinkwater so well, but a cloth cap, a hard starched collar and stiff, correct tie. The children were always a little afraid of him, though he had a fancy for our eldest boy, John, remembering remarks of his in earlier days, which amused him. He wrote verses in the children's books, only one of which has survived. In John's book he wrote:

*Hudson's
last days*

Force of Habit

A tail behind, a trunk in front
Completes the usual elephant.
A tail before, a trunk behind,
These things we very rarely find.

If you for specimens should hunt
With trunk behind and tail in front,
The search would occupy you long,
The force of habit is so strong.

Housman, I believe, had a secret fund of affection, but a certain frustrated and sombre twist in his nature kept it in cold storage; he certainly discouraged any show of affection towards himself. Like MacTaggart of Trinity, he was an unashamed Tory and a bitter patriot. He had scant sympathy with idealists, since every ideal has its inherent danger, being in conception one thing, in action another. The horizon, however high a man may climb, remains on a level with his eye. In the perfectibility of mankind Housman had no belief; there was the beauty of nature, and here and there men living with courage and decency. More one could not expect.

During 1922 I made my last drawing of W. H. Hudson. Poor Hudson, he was one of the rare men I have known who feared to grow old, unable to face the prospect of death. Yet he knew he had now little time before him, and told us he had burned all the letters he had kept, and his manuscripts too. We upbraided him for the destruction of these last, which seemed to us wanton. The next day he left a package at our door. Within was a note, and a number of MSS., odd chapters of his books, and one complete manuscript, saved from the burning. A few weeks later, while we were away, we read of Hudson's death. He was buried at Worthing beside his wife. We went to his flat when we returned, to choose some books he wished me to have. His field-glasses he left to my wife. I was surprised to find these, which he used for watching birds, were little more powerful than



DESERTED MILLS AT CHALFORD
by Michael Rothenstein

ordinary opera glasses. There was nothing of value in his flat; only a few poor ornaments. He was never fastidious in his tastes. His books on birds and natural history went to the Society for the Protection of Wild Birds, to which he had long been devoted. *Hudson's last days*

Morley Roberts was to write Hudson's life, and enquired about the portraits I made of him at various times, most of which Hudson disliked, though when I asked him, he seemed willing enough to sit: 'Of course I knew you and Mrs Rothenstein were devoted to Hudson. Who wouldn't have been? Only some self-centred bellower whom he looked on as *Vinchusa*, say, for he had a grave and deep contempt for the howling monkeys of literature and art. I've seen many splendid men (some who were nobodies!) but never such an eagle of a man as H. The most human of all humans, that's what he was, with all his faults (and) shining virtues. I want to see your portraits of him . . . I remember your black and white "abstract" of H. Much as he loved you he hated that and only lately told me he had hidden it away. That won't hurt you to know, for H. had never been educated up to a purely intellectual art and couldn't understand a summary in a few planes. And as you say it put an age to him, while he felt ageless. That's why he and I with 17 years difference might have been in some ways twins. Not till the last two years did I ever refrain from saying just what I felt. Latterly his failing heart had tended to make me more cautious. In music he loved the old Italian opera: I think a fugue of Bach would have left him where a pure line etching did, in your drawing. But there was never one who felt so all round. He was as much interested in my work on cancer as in a poem. I am supposed to write something about him. I never thought it possible till two years ago, when he cleared up for me as if mists had rolled off a mountain chain. But even so one had to go round him—why it's Everest and yet a child! I can't get a summary so must put down what I know. It will be just as I saw him and loved him and criticized him and rejoiced and argued with him in the black old days 30 to 40 years

Hudson and Cunningshame Graham ago. And as for critics, I don't care. The book will be for all of you who loved him. For you, all of you, I'm writing it: If I leave it unfinished, Cunningshame Graham and my step-daughter are to finish it.'

Happily, Morley Roberts did complete the book, which appeared in 1924. Interest in Hudson has not lessened as so often happens after a man's death. His books are still widely read and he is acknowledged to be one of the notable writers of English. 'I acclaimed him as probably the first writer of English,' wrote Cunningshame Graham. 'Nothing can fill the gap left by Hudson for he was like nothing else in the world. As a man and as a writer Hudson was unique. He wrote to me on July 31st saying he had been staying with Wilfrid Blunt who appeared very ill. Hudson was to go first himself, then Blunt, a very old friend of mine. I made them known to one another, and though so unlike they had a side in common, the love of birds and nature. Hudson went now and then to stay there, an ideal place for him, secluded, hidden in woods and no modern "improvements". They must have been a remarkable host and guest, both over six feet high, both 82 years of age. Both men of genius, and both remarkably handsome and striking in appearance. R.I.P.'

Graham's picture of these two noble old men, Hudson and Blunt, puts me in mind of a description of two very different persons, two young women then newly married, on a visit to a young Mrs (Burne)-Jones—Mrs William Morris and Mrs Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Elizabeth Siddal).

Such a friendship as was Graham's for Hudson was a beautiful thing. Indeed, one of his last acts, scarcely a month before he died in South America, was to search out 'Los Veinticinco Ombúes', the house in which Hudson was born in 1841.

T. E. Lawrence likewise revered Hudson, both as man and as writer. Although my portrait of him was finished, T. E. came often to see us. He was generous in his praise of the drawing I made of Alan Dawnay for his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. On the 5th of February, 1923, he wrote:

Dear Rothenstein,

*T. E.
Lawrence
and the Air
Force*

This letter is contrite, and at the same time joyful. I went on Saturday to the Grosvenor Galleries and saw your drawing of Dawnay; and it's wonderful. I'm ashamed I asked you to do it for me, since I intended just an ordinary head: and you have made so particular a study of it, that he's one of the best things in your show. I score, of course, and Dawnay does, but it's rather wrong of me to have occupied so much of your time and skill. You must, I think, have liked him as a sitter. The other drawings show that your new 'set' of serious men is making progress. I liked the John head particularly; but indeed very many of them were enviable things. I hope the public with the means to envy will agree with me; or have agreed with me.

My own affairs halt irregularly on one leg. The Air Force had to get rid of me, since I owned more publicity (against my desire) than was decent in a mechanic. I didn't want to go, since the work and the company were both curious and interesting; also I had nothing else to go to, and have been in low water since. No one will offer me a job poor enough for my acceptance! It has cost me great pains to get admitted to low life again, and my wish is to progress downward, rather than up the ladder once more.

Many thanks for the ring and cloak and things, which duly arrived in Barton Street. Baker¹ is still my landlord and my post office; though I have alienated my bedroom to another tub-dweller of my own sort.

Please give my regards to Mrs Rothenstein, and to the herd. I will call when next, or if, I establish myself in London again; and many more thanks for doing the portrait so exceedingly well. Dawnay is a first-rate man, and deserved it; but such justice is a rare thing.

Yours sincerely,

T. E. LAWRENCE.

¹ Sir Herbert Baker, R.A.

*Character
of Lawrence*

A month later he asked whether I would do another drawing for *The Seven Pillars*, 'a man with an ordinary "Colonial" face, but a very decent one.' But it appeared he didn't get away on leave, as Lawrence hoped.

T. E. Lawrence attracted me as he attracted most men. As with Housman, it was flattering to win the friendship of one reputed to be unsociable. Maybe he was less critical of artists than of others; 'good egg' was a frequent exclamation when he was looking at canvases and drawings. Doubtless, after long and bitter days with Feisal in Paris he found it a relief to be among men whose intentions at least were honest. He rarely talked of Paris and Versailles, but when he spoke of politicians it was with scarifying bitterness. Generals he regarded as rudimentary bunglers in the art of war—he made an exception of Lord Allenby. It must be remembered that Lawrence's sympathies were with the advanced writers and painters. I do not suggest that he was erratic in judgment; his critical insight was acute and his knowledge of men almost uncanny. But in years he belonged to the younger generation, and shared many of their extremest prejudices and aims. I was put in mind of Max's caricature of Lord Ponsonby looking at himself as a one-time page to Queen Victoria—what would Lenin and Trotsky say! Lawrence, too, wondered sometimes what William Roberts and D. H. Lawrence would say when he joined Winston Churchill as adviser for Middle-Eastern affairs. I was amused, reading Winston Churchill's essay on Lawrence, to find him apparently unaware of T. E.'s hesitation, of the persuasion needed to get him to enter a Whitehall office. Once within, he got down to his work, enjoyed his position and the sense of useful service. He always spoke warmly of Churchill's wise handling of the Arabs' legitimate grievances. From the Colonel Blimps, from men who had 'arrived', he withdrew himself; but he had a queer hero-worship for certain men he admired, for Hudson and Hardy, for D. H. Lawrence and Shaw. Among the younger poets it was Sassoon; in a letter to me he wrote: 'Sassoon comes out on top of all of us War-

timers, I think. More vigour, more grace and swiftness of movement, more fire and heat—that's in his poetry—and more tranquil charm in his prose. S. S. strikes me as probably a great writer, all in all.' To the praise of such men he was not indifferent and he was pleased to be liked by them, was flattered by their friendship. For in Lawrence, who disliked most women, there was a feminine element. Accustomed to flattery, he could be unconcerned; he tried to evade it, yet I think he would have missed the interest he everywhere created. He liked to disappoint, and to disappear. He told me, for instance, that at a time when publishers and editors were offering large sums for anything he cared to write, he was sending pseudonymous articles to newspapers, at two pounds the article, all of which were returned to him! He amused himself with games of this kind. I could imagine him the Robin Hood of the boys' story, robbing fat abbots and throwing their purses to the poor. One of his elders to whom he was most deeply attached was David Hogarth. Hogarth indeed he revered, and from him he took frank and searching criticism. When I asked Hogarth to write a page on Lawrence for a book of portrait drawings he readily agreed. 'Lawrence has just been in here and he says he doesn't mind so long as I tell neither the truth nor the reverse. I don't contribute to the Lawrence Boom, so don't expect anything serious.' And when he sent me his typescript, he wrote, 'Here is the best I can do. It won't be understood, but then few people know him except me, and I don't!'

Hogarth agreed with me that Lawrence's business now was to write. At heart Lawrence was an artist, but his standard was set too high; for him the best was a deterrent, and enemy, as the French say, of the good. I tried to make Lawrence believe that writing was now his chief concern; that depression and uncertainty come from self-thwarting.

General Smuts, of whom I made a drawing during 1923, was interested in Lawrence's Arab campaign. In some ways, he said, it reminded him of his own experiences when carrying on his guerilla tactics against the British in

Housman and the celestial globe South Africa. Smuts, who didn't want the Germans back in South Africa, was none the less gloomy over the impossible financial terms imposed on them, believing we were making a grave mistake, for which later we should pay dearly.

I stayed for a while with Lawrence at All Souls College, and also went to Cambridge, where Housman put me up. He had been looking for a celestial globe and as I happened to have one, I sent it to him. 'I am very grateful for it', he wrote, 'and I am now completely equipped for dealing with the fifth book of Manilius for which I required it; I am now finishing the fourth.' I asked him if he would write four or five hundred lines on Thomas Hardy, for a new book of portraits I was preparing. 'My dear Rothenstein,' he replied, 'I am sorry if it upsets your arrangements, but I am not going to write literary criticisms for you or for anyone else, and moreover I should feel awkward and embarrassed in writing about Hardy under his nose. I do not mean that it would violate any finer feeling or general notions which I may happen to have, but it would distress my sensations, which I believe are in some respects morbid.'

Housman never hid from me his dislike of my drawings of him, though he only once showed unwillingness to sit; and one of the drawings I made hung in his room at Trinity. 'You might tell William', he wrote to my wife, 'that he has lost the monopoly of my features, as I have been drawn this last year for my two Colleges by two artists named Dodd and Gleadowe. The two drawings are very unlike, but neither of them makes me look so nasty as the portrait which the College bought from William, and so prevented him, to my great relief, from exhibiting it any more in public and from adding malignant touches from time to time, as he used to do when he was out of temper. But I have a beautiful and forgiving nature and I wish him as well as you a Happy New Year in response to your wishes for me.' After Housman's death—alas, how many of my friends have I had to mourn!—his friend, A. S. F. Gow, told me that Housman

exchanged the drawing he owned for this one, owned by Trinity College, and then destroyed it!

*Burne-Jones's
portraits*

I never heard Housman speak of Mackail, another eminent Latinist, nor Mackail of Housman. I fancy each respected the other. Mackail too is a poet, as well as a fastidious scholar. He and his wife lived but a short distance away from us at Kensington. Their house had a special atmosphere, a quality; those one met there seemed always at their best. On the white-washed walls hung many of Burne-Jones's paintings, among them two portraits of Margaret Mackail, which touched me by their quiet beauty each time I saw them. Burne-Jones, like Watts and Rossetti, gave, together with the outer grace of womanhood, an inner grace which adds a peculiar quality to English painting. In Burne-Jones's work there is no experiment—what need of experiment when there is certainty of direction? I find uncommon beauty in his portraits, in the quiet dignity of pose, the serenity of eyes, lips and hands. I get another kind of pleasure from portraits by Manet, Whistler, Degas and Renoir, from the freshness and desirableness of Renoir's sturdy work-girls, the slim refinement of Whistler's pale full-lengths, the sometimes aristocratic, sometimes bourgeois character of Degas' portraits. It is not a question of preferring one to the other but of response to the challenge of each. Ugliness, viciousness even, when interpreted as they can be by a Toulouse-Lautrec, may be admirable too. But there is a current tendency to recognize only one kind of character and to deny another. Surely grace and innocence are as striking in their way as the more dramatic aspect of the prostitute. The rendering of fine breeding, especially notable in the portraits of Watts and Alfred Stevens, has been the special contribution of English portraiture. When the aristocratic spirit is condemned, as it is by the younger generation, whose generous sympathies are with the left in politics, the work of these painters can scarcely find favour. The system which bred people with the leisure to practise the finer graces of life is being swept away. An inheritance from turbulent times,

Inherited when the people needed protection, to-day it exists only as
wealth an empty shell. Yet the urge towards perfection, in one form or another, is a permanent force in mankind. Titles may go and personal wealth, but there will always be some who strive to perfect their conduct, to discipline their thoughts and their actions, to have human relations with all kinds of men and women.

At least the old landed families were the staunch patrons of the arts, setting up fine buildings, employing good artists and craftsmen, laying out estates, planting forests. To-day our aristocrats, far from such fruitful enterprise, live largely by disposing of the wealth their ancestors created.



AUGUSTUS JOHN

CHAPTER II

A MATTER OF PORTRAITS

DURING the autumn and winter I especially enjoyed London. The pensive atmosphere throws a fine blue veil of poetry over even the least attractive buildings and gives to the trees and lakes in the parks the delicate charm of a Chinese landscape. The spire of Kensington Church, seen from Kensington Gardens, might be that of a country church in a sylvan setting. By the autumn strangers and sight-seers have gone. Friends come more readily than during the over-busy season to sit and talk, intimate and restful, by the fire-side.

*About
portrait
drawings*

I was kept busy in my Kensington studio, where I had many sitters for paintings and drawings. Among them was Lord Cecil, whose frayed collar and cuffs I respected, thinking that birth and breeding allow of the fine carelessness which artists and poets regard as their privilege!

I met Lord Cecil some time afterwards when he failed to recognize me; I ventured to remind him that a painter has many sitters, while a sitter has but few painters!

A drawing of Augustus John I made in his own studio, by artificial light, a nervous business to draw so superb a draughtsman. But he wrote me a charming letter in which he said that he was content to remain thus represented.

I had previously made one or two drawings of Lord Balfour; now Miss Alice Balfour wanted a drawing of her brother for herself. The drawing I made met with her approval; but a few months afterwards came a note to say that though her friends thought the drawing a good likeness, she

would like me to remove the lines between the brows, which gave a too serious expression to the face. It is risky to fiddle with a drawing, once done, and I replied that when a man like her brother had reflected long and deeply on the problems of life, some signs of thought must inevitably appear in his features. She did not press the point.

Two drawings of Sir Walter Parratt, then well over eighty, found favour with his sisters, who acquired them; but the effect of a portrait, drawing or painting, on near relations is never to be depended on; the artist appears to be either a benefactor or a criminal.

Archibald Russell asked me to paint his portrait in his herald's tabard, with a velvet cap Holbein might have designed. The effect of the gorgeous costume was a little marred by the tails of the scarlet coat showing beyond the tabard; these I pinned up that they might not appear in the painting. Russell, not displeased with his presentment, generously advised a friend to have me paint his wife; later the portrait was sent to be sold at Christie's. I am told the accepted rule regarding portraits is that the client pays half the sum agreed on before the first sitting and if the work fails to satisfy him it remains with the painter. Charles Shannon told me he worked on this understanding, but I have never had the courage to propose this reasonable form of agreement. It is upsetting to know that work done to the best of one's ability is disliked, whether the dislike be reasonable or not. Unreasonable it often is. Theodore Watts-Dunton told me that Rossetti, having sat to Watts, so disliked the result that he offered one of his own pictures in exchange for the portrait and then destroyed it. I have heard of similar cases. I have mentioned A. E. Housman's destruction of one of my drawings.

Occasionally one is asked to paint a posthumous portrait from photographs: to me, always an unattractive task. But Sickert delights in painting posthumous presentments of the living! I heard of an admiral who wished to have Sickert paint him. At the studio some twenty snapshots were taken;

the admiral enquired when should he return. 'Return!' said Sickert, 'I never want to see your face again!' And Sir William Llewellyn told us how, when he went to visit Sickert at Broadstairs, he was shown a number of canvases. 'My wife helps me with the painting,' Sickert explained, 'she is a better artist than I am. I put in a few final dabs of colour, et voilà.' Sickert was, of course, exaggerating; his handiwork is unmistakable. He gives himself to the mood of the moment, and loves throwing squibs into the talk. Llewellyn, it appeared, had gone down to talk over difficulties which had occurred at the Academy. Sickert was all charm, gaiety and wit, full of enchanting stories. Llewellyn, delighted with his visit, left without touching on any unpleasantness. Next morning he read of Sickert's resignation from the Academy!

CHAPTER III
CONTINENTAL AND ENGLISH ART
SCHOOLS

DURING 1923 W. B. Yeats and Alice Stopford Green were elected Senators of the Irish Free State. I wrote to congratulate them; how unusual, but how right, that a poet and a historian should be given high office! I heard from Mrs Green:

90, *S. Stephen's Green,*
Dublin.
Jan. 9th, 1923

My dear Mr Rothenstein,

It was very agreeable to hear from you again and to find in your letter so much kind and old-world remembrance. I was greatly surprised at my election to the Senate as I had never applied for it at all, and I don't know that my best qualifications are for a public assembly—for which I have always had a great distaste—but there may be a good many private ways of doing something useful, more perhaps when we get more normal than we are now when everybody is over-worked and overstrained.

Do come over again some time. There are things in Ireland much less austere than Glendalough and quite as beautiful. Anyhow in these days of hugeness it is a wonderful refreshment to see before oneself again the day of small things and of what might be done in them. You will find me here as before and delighted to see you again.

With all true remembrances of a long friendship, and many common sympathies,

Yours very heartily,

A. S. GREEN.

Yes, I knew what she meant by her 'day of small things, and what might be done'. It fell in with my view that the major part of the creative energy of the whole country was assembled in London, where much of it was wasted. What finally were we all doing, we painters, crowded together in London? I was obsessed with the thought that each of us might be doing more fruitful work elsewhere, where we had local roots. True, there is beauty of form and colour everywhere under the magic of light; one can concentrate on anything, and find for oneself a sufficient task for each day. Yet if called on for more ambitious tasks wouldn't one finally rise higher to the occasion? Were not artists formerly stimulated by the subjects they were given? There were painters like Vermeer, Chardin, supreme through doing their work supremely well. But to-day does anyone paint supremely well? Minor artists like Boucher and Guardi painted with a finish beyond our powers; for all their gifts, even John and Steer are muddlers by comparison. Indeed, one day when I was admiring the quality of his paint Steer, in his modest way, said, 'Well, I muddle about and suppose something comes in the end.' Muddle about! That is what most of us do. Moreover, compared with the best of the Victorians, our subject matter is poor. Tonks, for all his Dante-like severity and personal integrity, was content to paint pretty girls doing nothing in particular, among tea things and bird cages and chintz curtains spotted with pleasant sunlight, somewhat loose in painting and construction. Steer, too, painted pretty models. It is in the countryside, away from London, that he found inspiration and produced his most impressive work. Augustus John, whose brain was once teeming with ideas for great compositions, had ceased to do imaginative work and was painting portraits; so was McEvoy; while Sickert, a very personal, but in the true sense a little master (as Herrick was a minor poet), was beginning to be hoisted up (to his secret amusement, I thought sometimes) into a place beside, almost above, Whistler and Degas, whose follower he was. It seemed

*Prague
before
Hitler*

as though the great wave of nineteenth century art was receding, had expended itself. And, as I said, such vitality as persists is concentrated in London. The provinces are impoverished thereby. Should not conditions allow artists to scatter—getting, and bringing, initiative and vitality?

At least in the country one sees the drama of the year, from which one may get ecstasy and inspiration. I was going through a period of doubt, doubt about the road we painters were on, about the value of our objective, of my own efforts. I envied Yeats and Mrs Green living in a small capital, within a small and intimate circle. But their position, later, seemed less enviable. Ireland had attained her national freedom; but individual freedom was to become curtailed. Some of the foremost writers were leaving Ireland, James Joyce, Stephen McKenna, for instance, and James Stephens. A. E. remained faithful to Dublin, and to his beloved Donegal, where he went each summer to paint.

For a while I was to leave London, for early in 1924 Sir Charles Trevelyan—he was then Minister for Education, and my chief at Whitehall—asked me to visit Paris, Prague, Berlin, and other centres abroad, to make a report on Continental art education. Furnished with a diplomatic passport, useful in those days of frontier complications, I went first to Czechoslovakia. I had a letter to our Minister at Prague, Sir George Clerk, and an introduction to President Masaryk. Sir George, the perfect diplomat, with his handsome face and slender figure, his eyeglass and suave manners, was kind and helpful. We had met, he reminded me, at Balliol, when I stayed there thirty years earlier with Basil Blackwood. He at once put me in touch with the Ministry concerned, whence I was taken to the Academy and to the School for Arts and Crafts. At the Arts and Crafts School I saw vigorous wood engravings and book illustrations, more striking than any I had seen in English schools. The students were capable and resourceful in many directions; but, as with us, little use seemed to be made of their versatile gifts. The Arts and Crafts School took lower rank than the Academy and I felt

the Educational Department to be insufficiently appreciative of the excellent work done there. But in Ministries of Education are men whose culture is book culture, who deal with systems and paper projects, and cannot be expected to understand a form of education, not to be measured by examinations, which consists, first and foremost, of *doing* well. I could sympathize with the staff of the Prague School; they were touching in their response to my estimate of their work, which, if passed on to the authorities, they believed would prove helpful. I did not see M. Masaryk, who was away from Prague at the time; but I was able to congratulate M. Beneš on the excellence of the Prague Schools. The Beneš had an apartment in the Castle, all white and gold. That Castle high above the city! One had no need to read history to understand its grim meaning in the past. Under its shadow the people of Prague were reminded under whose rule they were, of the power of Vienna; while from its massive walls there grew, flower-like, the slender spire of a gothic cathedral. Now the proud Austrian nobles have been driven out, their great houses occupied by bourgeois families, Prague has become a bourgeois capital.¹ Sir George Clerk took Mrs George Keppell and her brother and myself to visit some of the old religious houses, among them a convent, once a favourite resort of the ladies of the great Austrian families. Here was a treasure of jewels, of diamonds and precious stones, brought by generations of ladies to the shrine of a saintly nun. The saint lies in a glass coffin above the altar, slender and maidenly, but bearded like a Persian Shah. Betrothed against her will by her parents, so the story runs, the saintly lady prayed, on her marriage night, that she might retain her virginity for Christ. Her prayer was answered, a thick black beard sprouted on her fair face, and her spouse, dismayed, left her to her chaste thoughts.

¹ This was written before the events of September 1938 and when the possibility of Czechoslovakia coming under German rule was unthought of.

*German
art-
schools*

From Prague I went to Dresden, admiring again on the way the strange tumbled shapes of the Saxon Alps. At Dresden I was met by my old friend, Ludwig von Hofmann, now a professor at the Dresden Academy. Here was a system new to me; for both painting and sculpture schools had two professors, the one following traditional ways, the other more or less abstract methods; the students might choose to work under one or the other. Moreover, not only had the professors ample private studios, where they were expected to carry on their own work, but the advanced students also had studios in which to prepare their compositions. Although five years had passed since the War ended, the students, beside being under-nourished, could ill afford the materials needed for their work. I gave von Hofmann ten pounds in exchange for one of my old sketch books, which would provide amply, he assured me, at the then current exchange, for their needs for weeks to come. Such poverty in so splendid a city! Present and future seemed alike hopeless.

In Berlin the hotels and cafés were crowded; one saw little sign of actual want. At the 'Kultur' Ministry I was received with a consideration that embarrassed me; Lord D'Abernon explained that my visit was the first occasion on which relations between English and German educational authorities were resumed since the war. Dr. Muthesius, a distinguished educationalist, took charge of me, and not only introduced me to all the schools, but put some of the difficulties of the Ministry before me. As at Prague, the Academy and its professors enjoyed superior status to the Kunstgewerbeschule. The Ministry was inclined to combine the two under one head, a plan that was hotly contested by one party, approved by another; what was my opinion? The account I gave of the Royal College of Art, with its sculpture and painting schools side by side with the school of design, gave support to the Ministry's plan, which I understand was finally adopted.

From Berlin I went to Halle and Munich, then to Paris. At Paris I visited the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Here I expected to find a fortress of academic tradition. Had the Academi-

cians thrown up the sponge? Where was the old severity, the integrity, of French training? Gone with the wind, and in its place capricious experiment, anarchic drawing and painting. The École des Arts Décoratifs, after the German schools, was disappointing; I saw better work being done in the Paris Municipal Schools. In one of these was a studio for fresco painting. The school that impressed me most was the Ecole Buhl, where the great tradition of French craftsmanship prevailed.

In my report to the President of the Board of Education I laid stress on the provision of private studios for the staff in all the Continental schools I visited, whereas in our provincial schools neither the members of the staff nor even the heads have studios wherein to do their own work. Moreover, while in Germany eminent artists—painters, sculptors and architects—were called to direct and teach in Academies and Schools of Arts and Crafts, and are expected to carry out both public and private commissions, as well as to teach, the heads of our provincial schools are in large measure mere administrators. I never ceased to urge on the Board of Education the desirability of attracting distinguished young artists, designers and craftsmen, to posts in the more important country schools. But there was an unfortunate system under which students at the Royal College of Art, if they wished to qualify as fully certificated teachers, must give up the major part of their last year to the theory of teaching, instead of using precious time to improve their practice. The passing of a paper examination qualified a man or woman for full pay as a teacher and for a future headmastership; while those who were keen to continue their practical work during their last year were excluded from the higher posts and salaries offered to supposedly fully qualified teachers. I failed to convince the Board of the injustice of this ruling, but had the satisfaction of knowing that after my retirement the Committee of Art and Industry were able to carry out this long delayed reform.

There were other things that worried me. Many of the

Students and scholarships local scholarships were too small to allow of the students keeping themselves decently—the women especially. There was, moreover, a system of loans from local authorities under which the students, bound to repay the sums advanced, were practically forced to accept teaching posts immediately on leaving the College. Now, I held the view that only those should envisage teaching as a profession who, besides being good craftsmen, had abundant personal vitality. I know too well the effects of poor teaching on students from some of the provincial schools. Again, scholarships were frequently given to young people with little indication of initiative and withheld from others who showed it. This was rarely the case in the awards made by the London County Council. But on one occasion two young men who sought an interview with me showed me drawings of remarkable promise; both had failed to gain scholarships. Without these they could not afford to continue their studies. I went to the County Hall to protest against the adjudicators' decision, which, the Chief Inspector being of my opinion, was reversed. One of the youths was Barnett Freedman, now a notable painter, designer and book illustrator who, among other things, was responsible for the Jubilee stamp, besides doing much work for the Post Office. The other student, Albert Houthuesen, has recently had a painting acquired under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest and a further work chosen by the Tate Gallery. But I must not be too critical of the scholarship system, which has allowed many of our ablest artists and craftsmen the chance to develop their gifts.

At least I was gradually changing the College from being in large part a training school for teachers to an active school for practical designers and artists. The professional art-masters remained suspicious and sullenly hostile, and did all they could to counter this tendency by overt and secret attack. Fortunately, for most of the changes I proposed, I had the full support of the Board of Education, with the confidence of each succeeding President. A different class of student was now attracted to the Royal College. Whereas,

under my predecessor, no one from the painting school had entered for the much sought after Rome scholarship for rural painting heretofore regularly gained by students from the Slade School, a fair proportion was now won by College students, as well as scholarships for engraving and sculpture. The Royal Academy Schools were likewise competing with success.

*An experi-
ment at the
London
County
Hall*

The relations between the Royal Academy School, then under Charles Sims, and the Royal College, were cordial. The Slade School stood aloof, contemptuous both of the Academy and the Royal College; in spite of friendly approaches, Tonks remained coy. For Tonks the Slade was the only school, Slade methods the only righteous methods. But it was the Slade School of Brown, Steer and himself; a pupil of Legros' day, as I was, did not count as a true Sladeite. Tonks' generosity and enthusiasms—and there were many—were for his own students only. On one occasion, however, Tonks did cooperate. This was when Ralph Knott, the architect to the new County Hall at Westminster, sounded Charles Sims and myself with a view to getting some mural paintings done in the Council Chamber. We deprecated giving important wall-spaces to untried youngsters; but in consultation with Henry Tonks and Walter Bayes we proposed that a set of lunettes in one of the many corridors should be painted by students, thereby showing what might be done by experienced artists on more important wall-spaces. The subjects we selected were modest ones, the London Parks; as we wrote later to *The Times*, believing that illustrations of contemporary and topographical interest invariably gain historic value by the mere lapse of time, we imposed as subjects the green spaces of which the London County Council are the guardians. Eight cartoons were prepared by students of each of the four schools, and placed in position, that they might be seen together and, where necessary, strengthened or modified. They were finally carried out to the architect's satisfaction, only to be rejected by the London County Council. Muirhead Bone, with his usual

An experiment at the London County Hall impulsive generosity, supported by a further letter in *The Times* our plea to the L.C.C. authorities to reconsider their decision, but with no more fruitful result. Nothing has been done in this great London building, since this first modest venture failed, by way of recording places and events connected with the rise and progress of municipal government in London. The usual large sums of money have, in lieu of this, been spent on portraits of L.C.C. Chairmen and Aldermen, flattering to their sense of self-importance, no doubt, but of little decorative, and of no great historic, value. This does not speak highly for the vision of the Aldermen and Councillors of the greatest city in the world, the centre of the British Empire.

CHAPTER IV

WALKING BACKWARDS INTO TIME

DURING the summer of 1923 I took my elder daughter, who had been for long seriously ill, to Leysin, hoping that Rollier's sun-cure might help her. Prejudiced by the many banal paintings of mountain scenery, I scarcely looked forward to the Swiss landscape. Commonplace may be in the picture; it is not in nature. The play of mists in the mountains makes a succession of splendid changing shapes, beautiful in the morning and evening. Once above the lower slopes, where trees can no longer take root, one is in a primeval world, grand, remote and bare. I have found it hard to follow the theory of time which Dunne has put forward; but here, at least, I could believe in a miracle of time; I was ten thousand years removed from the dreary *pension* I had left but a few hours ago.

*A philosopher at
Leysin*

People who stay in *pensions* one might imagine are carefully selected for the bleakness of their minds. Happily in our *pension* we found a man with an extraordinarily well-informed mind, apparently knowing the literature of the world, Eastern and Western—a French philosopher, Henri Meyerson. He had lately, he told me, written on the relation of science to philosophy. I found him to be an intimate friend of Einstein. He was familiar with the theories of the English philosophers and physicists, but had few personal acquaintances in England. I discovered later that Meyerson's writings were in fact well known among English philosophers, but not among scientists.

Conrad's death 'Je vous suis très reconnaissant de m'avoir apporté la bonne opinion de M. Wildon Carr,' he wrote, 'avez-vous vu Sir Ernest Rutherford, comme vous espérez le faire? . . . je me demande s'il connaît même mon nom, c'est-à-dire qu'il le connaît maintenant puisque vous lui avez parlé de moi, mais je ne serais pas étonné qu'il l'eût ignoré jusque-là. Beaucoup de physiciens s'occupent fort peu de ce que font les philosophes, même les philosophes de la science, surtout s'il s'agit de livres écrits dans une langue étrangère . . . Je serais infiniment désireux que mes théories puissent être connues du public anglais.'

I do not think any of his books have been translated, or that his theories are known outside a small circle of philosophers. But Bertrand Russell and others spoke of Meyerson with marked respect. His writings would, in any case, be of interest to philosophers and men of science only.

It was while at Leysin I heard of Conrad's death, a year after Hudson's. The last time I had seen Conrad his condition alarmed me; he was nervous, irritable, and spoke of being exhausted. This mood was no unusual one with him; even when I first knew him, twenty years before, he would say he was finished, emptied. Of late I had seen little of him, partly because Oakridge was a long way from Kent, also perhaps for the reason that as a man's fame grows he attracts new friends, and when the halo of success has become firmly fitted to his head there gather around him the most uncritical worshippers. Maybe one so highly strung, of so exacting a nature, contemptuous of anything but the best in himself and others, inclines to flattery. Admiring the clarity of the French, Conrad was critical of English authors. For Henry James he had great respect and he always spoke warmly of Stephen Crane; but anyone, reading the letters he wrote to his other writer friends, would believe his enthusiasm for their books to be unbounded. Now the proud overwrought spirit was no more, and again one was met by this baffling mystery of being, and of non-being.

Sometime after Conrad's death his publishers, Doubleday,

THE DENT DU MIDI FROM LEYSIN



Page & Co., proposed to print a memorial edition of his collected works; they asked a number of Conrad's friends to write an introduction for each volume; I was asked to write on *Notes on Life and Letters*. Seriously ill at the time, I yet did not wish to refuse my tribute to a great friend and writer.

*A letter
from
Manning*

Alas, the sun-cure which did wonders for children crippled with consumption of the joints could do little for our daughter. But at least, it taught her how sun treatment should be given, how effective it could be, when later she worked for a while at Chailey. During many months of serious illness she had need of her friends to keep her hold on life. Frederic Manning, Walter de la Mare and Ralph Hodgson were her most constant visitors. A letter from Manning speaks beautifully of the relations between my daughter and myself:

*Buckstone Farm,
Chobham,
Surrey*

17-8-1924

My dear Will,

Even when you touch a melancholy subject, your letters are written with a golden pen: and that drama of light and shadow played in front of the eternal hills, is a symbol to you of that other drama played before the eternal fates.

Humanity is nobler in its sufferings, than in its victories. But a crowd suffering or victorious is irrelevant beside the individual soul. One ceases to think of a crowd, eventually, as individuals are detached from it, each with his own individual gift, and each capable, if it be only for a moment of beauty and nobility. Each of us, as it were, is a verdict on life, a Judgment if only implied and tacit; scarcely a Judge.

Give my love to Rachel and tell her I love her wise patience, and that I hope she is even now colouring to the golden brown of the wheat ripening opposite my window. You seem to me two people wrapped up in love, as in a warm cloak; and I can only send my love to salute it.

Yours always affectl . . .

FRED.

*Hodgson
teases my
daughter*

Yes, my daughter had indeed a wise patience, and she had need of it. Throughout her long trial she retained her youthful appearance. I remember how Ralph Hodgson teased her about her childish looks, telling her how she contradicted the usual process of the years—she was walking backwards into Time and would soon be again in long clothes! There would follow a moment when a small report would be heard—pouff! and she would have vanished from our sight and start travelling backwards through the years. She would meet Tennyson and Matthew Arnold—how he envied her! Landor, Borrow, Trelawney, then Keats, Shelley, Burns—no, no! Burns would break her heart, she musn't meet him—Shelley, yes, they would understand one another—and, of course, the Lambs, she musn't forget to go to the print shop in Green Street, just off Leicester Fields, where she would see, I forget what print; she must look at it carefully—he had been searching for it for years. On and on she would go until there would come a moment when having travelled up to the end of our present time she would start to return, once again go forward, and finally, when our civilizations had reached the end of their span and cycle, and she had discovered how to move out of the three dimensional orbit, she would meet them and be able, with her experience, to conduct them up and down the corridors of time! One of Hodgson's extravagant flights!

We were now to lose Hodgson. He had no private income and was hard put to it for a livelihood. His friends hoped he might get some appointment, as a professor of English literature in one of the universities, for instance; but nowhere was there a vacancy. Then came an invitation from Japan, to follow Robert Nichols in the chair of English at Tokyo. This offer he refused; in Tokyo he would be too much of an official professor, nor would he care for the social life there. A Japanese friend suggested Sendai, a small university in the north of the country. This suited Hodgson's views better. He would be near the Hairy Ainus, certain to attract him. He and his wife packed up their few belongings, and with his

tame magpie in a cage in one hand, and a parcel of books in the other, they left England for a new life in a strange country. It was three years before he returned among us again and then for a brief time only.

A harpsichord for Bridges

In Japan he was hoping to inspire in his students a love of literature and, what seemed to him equally important, some awareness of Western character. The inadequate knowledge of English among his pupils was to make his task a formidable one.

But what a loss to England! There are few with Hodgson's insight, with his gift for exciting in young people an ardour for spiritual integrity. He is one of those who, in Gautier's words, are 'bienfaisant à la manière du soleil qui sans donner un sou à personne fait la vie et la richesse du monde'.

This year, 1924, Robert Bridges was to reach his eightieth birthday. To celebrate this, and their recognition of the Poet Laureate's genius, a number of his friends presented him with a Dolmetsch harpsichord. Among others asked to subscribe to the gift for Bridges was Frederic Manning, who wrote, I thought, with a delicate perception of Robert Bridges' poetry:

18-9-24

My dear Will,

Evidently Siegfried Sassoon thinks of us in a mutual relation, and I find this pleasantly flattering. Certainly I shall help to give the Laureate a clavichord. Perhaps he is not altogether a poet in whom, in eighteenth century phrase, I 'taste'; but this means only that I consider him, in his work, as possessing more music than vision; and even, to put a fine edge on it, more movement than action. But his immediate predecessors were inclined to consider poetry as too exclusively concerned with a visible and tangible world. He restored to it a musical value in developing the purely lyrical element; and if perhaps he came to treat words too much as sounds and not enough as symbols, his excess was only proportionate to the previous defect. He has written less of

*Bridges
and hand-
writing*

(sic!) than for poetry; and there is a splendid courage in taking that way. So I shall cast my few grains of incense on the brazier before the god, and with a murmured 'Numen inest!' move decorously among the reverent worshippers.

Yours always affectionately,

FRED.

To each of those who subscribed Bridges sent a letter, reproduced in collotype, showing a handwriting as vigorous and shapely as ever. A week later I heard from him from Chilswell:

My dear Rothenstein,

It was very kind of you to write on that wise. I have found one chief reward of being an artist is the friendship of kindred spirits that it brings. I suppose a sportsman might say the same of sport. I can afford to allow him his satisfaction.

I receive your letter in all humility—but do not value it the less for the sense of my unworthiness. I have been having a pleasant year because for several months I have been writing poems, and have not yet broken off—I hope that they will some day justify themselves to you—and to others; for the great objection to my pursuit is that it occupies me so much that I neglect all sort of duties—and that is why I have let some days pass without thanking you for your letter . . . and it is difficult to thank you as well as I wish.

I much appreciated your writing on my taking your sincere expressions as you intended them—Certainly there are few people who can say them as you, so I thank you again for your strong encouragement.

Yours very sincerely

ROBERT BRIDGES.

Handwriting was of course one of Bridges' peculiar interests. (I remember him looking at someone's letter and throwing it down with the comment 'What a horrid fellow!') Previously, during September, I had heard from Bridges:

To the Donors of the Clavichord -

Since I am unable to write personal thanks to each of the many friends who contributed to honour my 80th birthday by their lovely gift I beg you to accept as a memento this portrait wh^{ch} was taken by Lady Ottoline Morrell & engraved by Mr Emery Walker: it also shows the clavichord. Apart fr. the beauty & excellence & great value of Mr Arnold Dolmetsch's instrument there is no sort of gift that I sh^d have preferred & it will add its delicate pleasures to whatever days may yet be in store for me. The recognition of my love for 17th century music & your respect for my tenancy of the poet laureateship are deeply appreciated by me. Praying that I may fully deserve your favour, I wish you a happy Xmas & long life.

Robert Bridges

Chilswell Dec 1924.

ROBERT BRIDGES' LETTER OF THANKS TO THE
SUBSCRIBERS FOR THE GIFT OF A CLAVICHORD
ON HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY

My dear Rothenstein,

*Bridges
and hand-
writing*

I called at the S. Kensington Museum yesterday on the chance of finding you. I was sorry to learn that you had been ill, but I was told that you were better. I wanted to talk with you . . . I am hoping to publish (as one of my S.P.E. Tracts) a batch of collotype facsimiles of the best English modern cursive, that is the *fluent* current English handwriting which I think is, at its best, very good. I find many people interested in this, but the most promising covers have so far been 'drawn blank'.

The writing that I wish to exhibit is the kind that ligatures freely with artistic forms, and I shall ask you if you will allow me to have a specimen of your own writing. Tho' I have not got far yet I can promise that you will be in good company.

I am hoping that you will be able to help me also in providing other specimens.

I have rather far-reaching purposes in this undertaking which I have not time to define—my notion is to have some two or three dozen specimens, and I shall include among them some examples of the scribe's script . . . and this is now easy to do . . . but my main object is to show the fluent writing, such as yours.

I hope you will help me.

Yours very sincerely

ROBERT BRIDGES

Two years later the tract appeared, printed at the Clarendon Press, with examples of cursive writing and of script. In it was included a specimen of my own hand, a compliment which I appreciated, coming from so fastidious a critic as Bridges.

CHAPTER V

MURAL PAINTINGS AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

*William
Bateson at
Merton*

WE went frequently to lunch with the William Batesons at Merton, near Wimbledon; there were no more delightful hosts. After lunch Bateson would show his latest finds—an old master, a Chinese or a Japanese drawing; or we would wander through the greenhouses, wherein the flowers and shrubs were perfect—no single leaf spotted or faded. For parasites were carefully excluded, lest they interfere with the cross-breeding which Bateson carried on for his Mendelian experiments. I have often heard the term Tory-democrat applied; it would have suited Bateson, though I associated him with no political party; no one more independent than he. The writer in *The Dictionary of National Biography* speaks of Bateson having ‘that burning passion for truth and that high conception of the calling of the naturalist which was of the essence of his personality’. Bateson had an equal contempt for the doctrinaire-socialist and for the ostrich-like diehard Tory with his head in the sand, and, since the brains are not placed in the backside, nor indeed are the fangs, this last is an ineffective opponent.

It was Bateson who put my name down for membership of the Athenaeum. Having been for some years a member of the Savile Club I had never thought of joining the Athenaeum, believing it to be a club for the solemnly eminent. But elected under Rule II, an unexpected distinction, I could not but accept membership. I was soon disabused of the idea of the solemnity of the Athenaeum; it became a second home

for me, where I enjoy converse with men of varying pursuits. I am often amused at the innocent comments made on the arts by men eminent in their professions. But fine taste and secure judgment on the arts are rare, and no man is the worse for lacking these concerning a subject alien to his nature.

*Sir Aurel
Stein and
Lyautey*

Early in 1924 I had a visit from D. Y. Cameron. It appeared that the Speaker of the House of Commons, Mr Whitley, was planning a series of wall-paintings for St. Stephen's Hall, on the site of the original House of Commons. Cameron was to supervise the work and choose the painters. He asked me to be one of them. I had long hoped for such a chance. The subjects, chosen by Sir Henry Newbolt, were allocated; mine was the audience given to Sir Thomas Roe, the first English Ambassador to the Mughal Court, by the Emperor Jehangir. My Indian experience would now prove useful. I set about making preparatory designs and wrote to India, with a view to getting dresses of the period copied; but none previous to the eighteenth century had survived. I must therefore rely for accuracy on my Mughal and Rajput drawings. I also consulted friends, Stanley Clark at the India Museum, and Sir Aurel Stein, over various details. No one would take Stein with his gentle, apologetic manner, with his 'please, please!', his quiet scholarly appearance, for an intrepid traveller, one of the greatest, I am told, who has explored the vast waterless deserts that lie east of Kashgar.

Sir Aurel deplored the lack of interest in Indian culture among English officials; and above all the decadence of Indian craftsmanship, in part due to the indifference of British and Indians alike, also in part to the influx of cheap English and German manufactures. He urged me to go to Morocco to see what Marshal Lyautey had done for Moorish craftsmen. Lyautey had called these craftsmen together, he told me, had assured them of his protection and had prohibited the import of inferior European products.

I first met Stein at the house of Sir Thomas Arnold, another lover of India, of Muhamedan culture especially, who

A Chantrey purchase in his gentleness, quiet humour and profound scholarship, had much in common with Stein. There was Sir Francis Younghusband too, with whom, in connection with the India Society, I had close relations. These three men, one of them a soldier, had a gentle humanity in common; all three were without the hardness which T. E. Lawrence could, on occasion, show, against himself as against others. I have already referred to Lawrence's admiration for Hudson. During May he wrote to me, 'I promised you the Nonesuch volume of Hudson's letters. . . . If you have not yet seen it you will be glad to find so much of the old man's views on books and people. He writes with such delightful pressure on his pen. Morley Roberts' book I don't think much of. There was nothing inhuman in Hudson, was there? He seemed so friendly and so quaint. Obviously a man who had lived much by himself, but no more individual than was necessary and inevitable. . . . Rumour goes that the Academy has bought something early of yours. If you live to Hudson's age you will be amused by their buying something of your present. My calculations are some twenty years out, apparently a trifle with me. Also Hudson was never old; never would be, would he? And if you stop painting for twenty years or so they will be buying your latest work. What a world—or rather what a set to live in it! God help them.'

Lawrence's letter was prophetic, if somewhat previous. A few months later a painting of my three elder children in fancy dress, *The Princess Badroulbador*, was acquired under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest, and was hung, according to the rule, at the Royal Academy, before going to the Tate Gallery.

I was pleased to be represented by this painting. In my children, while they were young, I found inspiring subjects. So had I in the Whitechapel Jews and, during the years I spent in the country, in trees, farms, barns and country people. But in my studio at the College, though I had time each day for my painting, I found it difficult to find sub-

jects. To arrange compositions in a studio, does not come naturally to me. I prefer to paint in rooms, where I see my sitters in natural surroundings. Hence, in my College studio, it was in portraiture I found the most satisfaction, in painting students most of all. For students sit admirably and will give all the time one wants. Moreover, they take an intelligent interest in the process. Fortunately, I can usually concentrate fairly closely when I take up brush or pencil. I have little faith in waiting for the mood; if it come it comes best when one is already at work. On the other hand, I have wasted much time over paintings ill-considered at the start, which have been discontinued. More labour must be given to a poor subject than to one that is happily conceived.

Before going to my painting room I would visit one or other of the College studios. To deal with students one must possess an energy, a resolution greater than their own. It is no help to them, and a poor thing for oneself, unless one can give of one's best, freshly minted. This can be done more readily with certain students than with others. There were some who made me mentally impotent, before whose work my brain curdled, my will power failed. To teach such students was futile, I felt, a waste of precious time. But to give myself faithfully brought a sense of fulfilment, even though I doubted whether the students benefited. Before learning something of students' ways, I had no theories of drawing or painting; but seeing haphazard studies prompted more logical and systematic methods, though I usually found an obstinate disinclination among the students to follow any method, especially in the painting and sculpture studios. There was a better sense of craftsmanship among the students of design.

I was gradually collecting an admirable staff, working harmoniously together. Unfortunately, during 1924 I had a difference with Derwent Wood, then Professor of Sculpture, which led to his resignation from the College. Wood, an attractive and vehement person, an excellent modeller, the most scholarly among the academic sculptors, was sub-

*A breeze
with
Derwent
Wood* ject at times to violent moods. I regretted his leaving and he was generous enough to admit having been in the wrong. On one matter especially I was in close agreement with him; this was the urgent need, since we have no Ministry of Fine Art, of an advisory body for the Arts. Lord Crawford had in fact drawn up a plan for a Fine Art Commission and Sir Aston Webb, then President of the Royal Academy, called a meeting of artists and others interested to discuss the project at Burlington House. A Royal Fine Art Commission was in due course set up. 'I am glad to think that the movement has your approval', wrote Webb, 'and thank you for the assistance you gave to its initiation.' Derwent Wood, to his disappointment, was not among the first Commissioners, though he was appointed later.

It was not easy to find a man of Wood's ability to replace him. I suggested Epstein as a possible successor, but in the opinion of the Board 'Epstein's appointment to a Professorship of the Royal College of Art would be a very perilous experiment and might cause considerable embarrassment'. Finally, Muirhead Bone put me in mind of Ernest Cole. Cole had been hailed as a youthful genius by Charles Ricketts, Selwyn Image and Laurence Binyon, and through their influence had been chosen to design and execute two great stone groups for the new County Hall at Westminster. I had heard nothing of him since, but at once realised he would be the man; Henry Moore, the ablest student in the sculpture school, became his assistant. The two worked admirably together until Cole retired.

About this time I was pressed by E. H. Carter, an enthusiastic officer of the Board of Education, to join a party at Aberystwith University where a number of subjects on the Development of Civilization were to be discussed. I went somewhat unwillingly; but was told that the Board wished me to represent them. I had previously visited Bangor, where my friend Miss Mary Rathbone took me about the countryside, when I was struck by the dourness of the Welsh houses and cottages. Again the buildings in the neighbour-



PORTRAIT OF A STUDENT AT HIS EASEL

hood of Aberystwith lacked character. But I heard some stirring singing by the university students, and I found a keenly attentive audience. The desultory talk I gave was published, together with the more scholarly lectures of my colleagues, under the title of *The New Past*. I left Wales with a feeling of affection for a warmhearted and responsive people. It was well that my visit proved a pleasant one for it was found that as a member of the Board of Education my expenses could not be repaid!

With Sir Alfred Davis, the Welsh Secretary at the Board of Education, I discussed many projects for giving more practical encouragement to Welsh artists. The difficulty was the usual one—lack of funds.

At the end of the College session I went back to Oakridge for a summer's painting. I had been somewhat overworked of late at the College, the Geddes axe having descended on all public departments; to ensure a staff sufficient for an increasing number of students, I took on an additional burden, that of the Professorship of Painting. At Oakridge I unwisely chose two subjects to paint down in the valley, carrying back my painting tackle and two large canvases up the long steep hill each day. This put an extra strain on my heart.

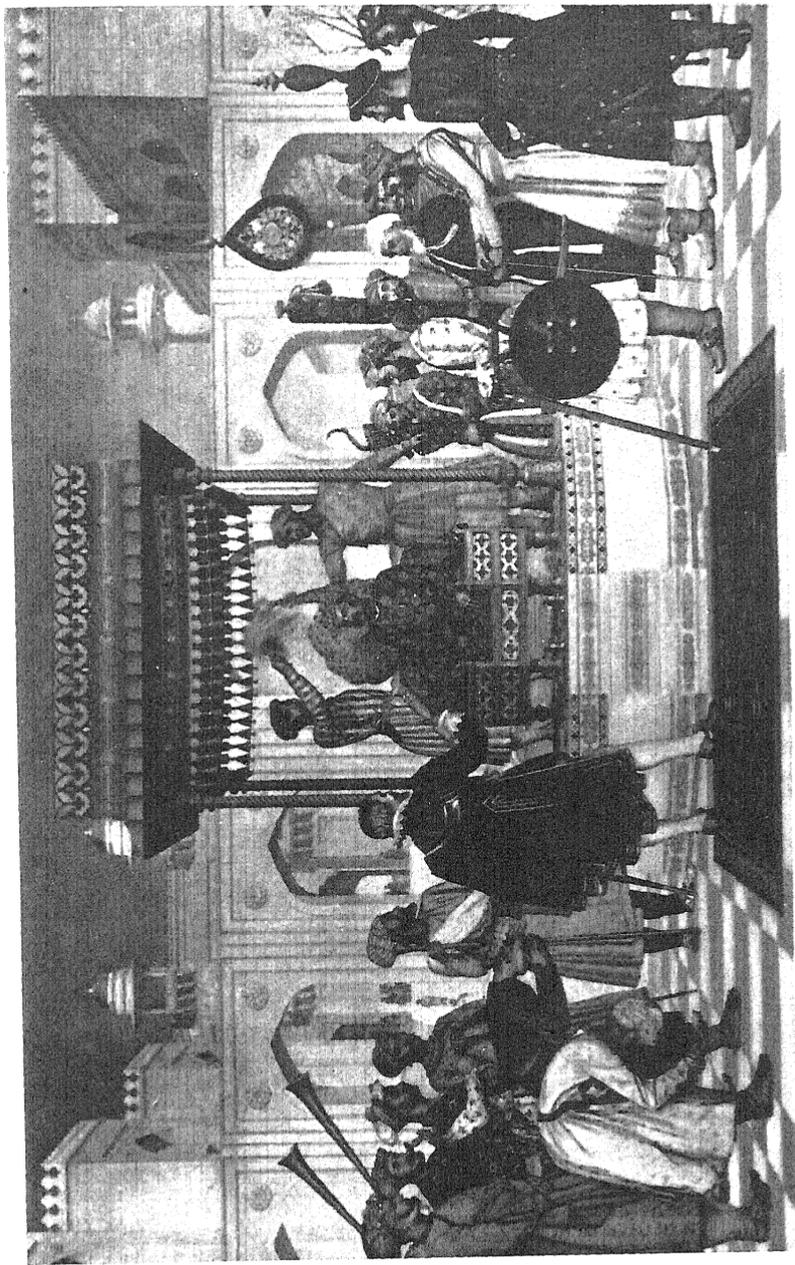
In the autumn my health broke down. Days of weakness are not days to look back to. I remember comforting my daughter, still seriously ill, with the new found knowledge that illness, too, is a part of life, no less fertile than other experience. But I understood as never before that life is action; it was painful to realize my uselessness, uselessness which might prove to be permanent. My medical adviser, Geoffrey Evans, was determined to keep me alive that I might at least carry out the mural painting I was to do for St. Stephen's Hall. On this he had set his heart. My friend, R. E. Roper, too, helped me with his knowledge of remedial exercises, and in addition fitted up an iron frame across my studio, a pulley running along it, with a looped strap attached to support my arm, while painting on the twelve-foot canvas. Without this support I could not have managed,

Mural paintings at St. Stephen's nor without the help of J. W. Tucker, my able assistant, who worked out the perspective and the architectural background.

Three among the artists chosen by Cameron were young untried men, A. K. Lawrence, Colin Gill and Thomas Monnington, lately holders of scholarships at the British School at Rome; the others were George Clausen, Glyn Philpot, Vivian Forbes, his friend and pupil, and Charles Sims, the last three no longer among the living. Before the eight paintings were open to the public, the King and Queen expressed a wish to see them. King George, considerate as always, sent a message to the Speaker that we were not to trouble about dress, thinking the younger artists might not have morning coats. But they all ordered new lounge suits! The King and Queen went conscientiously round, accompanied by each of the painters in turn. Then I noticed that Mr Whitley showed them various points of interest including the spot where the Speaker's chair stood in old St. Stephen's.

After the King and Queen had left, I asked Mr Whitley his reason for showing the King and Queen sites they would be familiar with. 'Familiar!' replied the Speaker. 'This is the first occasion on which an English sovereign has entered the House of Commons since Charles the First burst in to arrest the Five Members!'

The paintings were unveiled by Mr Baldwin, as Prime Minister, who announced that a knighthood had been conferred on George Clausen. Afterwards all the artists concerned, except myself, had pleasant letters from the noble lords responsible for the panels. I thought that perhaps the Duke of Bedford, sponsor for my Indian subject, was disappointed with my interpretation. Some years afterwards I happened to mention this to our friend, Miss Flora Russell, who would find out from her cousin, she said, the reason for his silence. Shortly afterwards she told me that the Duke had never been to St. Stephen's Hall to see the painting he had paid for—a truly ducal attitude of beneficence and indifference!



SIR THOMAS ROE'S EMBASSY TO THE COURT OF JEHANGIR

Soon after the paintings for St. Stephen's Hall were finished Cameron was again asked to superintend a series of paintings: this time for the Bank of England. For the mural paintings he chose the younger artists, A. K. Lawrence, Thomas Monnington and Colin Gill; for the portraits he approached the seniors, George Clausen and myself, and later Walter Russell and Francis Dodd. A. K. Lawrence, however, was to do the portrait of the Governor, Mr Montagu Norman. My subject was Mr Norman's predecessor, Lord Cullen of Ashbourne, who, unfortunately, was in delicate health. Standing tried him severely. I therefore painted his head while he was sitting and for his figure (his height was exactly six feet) a young Guardsman stood. I chose as a background a corner of the old Council room at the Bank, and made my studies during the winter months; consequently my background was overdark. When lately I saw the painting in position (the canvases were done some ten years before the new Bank was ready to receive them) I repainted the background in part, for the painting gets no direct light where it now hangs. I should have painted the portrait in a lighter key. But as with the mural painting at St. Stephen's Hall, I have had no second chance.

*Portraits
for the
Bank of
England*

CHAPTER VI
A VISIT TO RAPALLO

*Stormy
passage for
de la Mare*

DURING recovery from illness I wanted to compare notes with de la Mare, who had been through a similar, though happily less serious, trial. 'I'd love', he wrote, 'to exchange yarns about our respective voyages. Mine certainly was heavy weather; and yet, somehow, when I have another look at the "heavy", quite a different but entirely elusive adjective comes into my mind. On one passage across the Atlantic—think of it, passage; what a word!—we had what even the second mate (or a similar official) described as half a hurricane. (I was conscious of no particular desire at the time to see the other half.) I was in the beastliest of boats, which now, thank heaven, is sunk. Indeed, it was not a ship, as David Bone insists on land lubbers saying, but just a boat. Somebody called it the St. Paul, and I should think he must be having a pretty hot time just now.

'Well, sky and sea engaged in a most insidious and violent argument. I can still hear the scream of the wind, and see my trembling shape eyeing the yeasty confusion from over the taffrail. But there was one lovely and unforgettable experience, in spite of every qualm; and that was to see snow-white birds at play among those marvellous sloping billows. They just played there as happily as gazelles in their natural haunts—to me almost a miracle to see, and *almost* worth being shipwrecked for. Well, I don't know why I am wearying you with all this stuff, except to explain that some similar kind of sea-bird was now and then the accompaniment of my heavy weather.'

When I did meet de la Mare we had a long talk on the subject. De la Mare has an irresistible way of questioning one to extract what he wants to know. 'Don't you think', he asked, 'that after fifty everyone should put down what he feels about life and its problems, what beliefs he retains, and has lost, what his final conclusions are?' But as a poet, I answered, he was habitually doing this and would continue to do it all his life. That to me is the exciting thing about poetry. Poetry is supposed to be something elusive; but the poet deals precisely with the things about which people are usually vague. He agreed; but what about the dream world? That too was a reality for him. Speaking of Ralph Hodgson, he deplored his long silence, though he admired his integrity in refusing to write without certainty of inspiration. But doesn't inspiration come sometimes when one is doing quite pedestrian work? It certainly does while one is painting; perhaps, because there is so much preparation to be done, and because painters work more regularly than poets.

Tagore, too, had been seriously ill and he wrote of his changed view of life:

*Santiniketan,
April 14, 1926.*

My dear friend,

How very nice to get your letter after such a long spell of silence. It deeply touches my heart, especially in the present state of my existence when I seem to be living in the dusk of a dimmed existence. The memory of the dawn of a friendship in a strange horizon revealing an unprobed depth of radiance in its wealth of colours that struck my mind with wonder moment after moment often comes back to me when I sit alone on my easy chair with no other claim of the world upon me but to be supremely lazy and forget all my absurd pretensions to be its benefactor. When a person is too much obsessed with the importance of his usefulness he is apt to cut himself from the access to the stream of simple enjoyments that flows across his life and thus to produce a dryness of soil which may be good for laying foundation of all

*Edward
Thompson
on Tagore*

kinds of things but never for the cultivation of living beauty of creation. With the breaking down of my health I have lost my occupation while gaining back the leisure which constantly reminds me of the natural field of my life now lying buried under the debris of my work. It brings to-day to my memory all the surprises of that fruitful time of rich idleness, that epic era of divine inability to which your thoughts belong so intimately. It may be too late for me to conjure it up again but it is good to know that I had once upon a time the full opportunity to live my own true life which was glorious for me and may be for others.

Ever yours,

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

Fortunately Tagore, in spite of some weaknesses attendant on age, had unusual reserves of strength. For his output was increasing, as poet, novelist, playwright, editor and pamphleteer, while he directed his university at Santiniketan, and found time to visit Canada, China, Persia and Europe. He represented in his handsome person the whole intellectual life of India, an immense burden for one man to shoulder. But interest in Tagore has, since the sensation caused by his first translated poems, *Gitanjali*, declined in Europe. Edward Thompson published a careful appraisal of Tagore as poet, novelist and philosopher. Oddly enough, Tagore disliked Thompson's book; he preferred an earlier and slighter work by Ernest Rhys. Rhys, however, has no knowledge of Bengali, and can only read Tagore in translation. Thompson wrote to me of his book:

*Scar Top,
Boars Hill,
Oxford.
16th March, 1931.*

Dear Professor Rothenstein,

Your generous letter is a delightful surprise. It meant four years of hard work to do the *Tagore* book, and I rarely felt sure of my opinions—for how *can* a foreigner be sure he



WALTER DE LA MARE

isn't making a fool of himself?—and my wife and I have grudged the time and labour, often almost bitterly. For the mere bulk of Tagore's work was itself like a steam-roller over the mind, and left very little there when I had finished! The Oxford Press, who had originally asked for the book, funk'd publishing it and it was held up for 3½ years. And then it got a disappointing press over here—not in amount of space, for experience has shown me that a book on an Indian subject *cannot* interest reviewers or editors unless it follows certain well-known lines—this book got quite a fair amount of space—but the space was so witlessly used. The *Times Literary Supplement* was provincial and querulous—the writer, who confessed he knew nothing about the matter, wasted his space in 'gravely doubting' if there was any 'value' in comparing English and Indian poets. I suppose he would not have complained if a man who wrote about Chaucer remembered Dante and the Provençals—and modern Indian literature has grown up under the shadow of English literature. And of course English poets are those my own countrymen know best, and next to Bengali and Sanskrit are those best known to Indian readers.

Tagore has been unlucky in this—so far as the *English* influence on his work goes he belongs to the Tennysonian age, but he has the misfortune to come up for judgement by the age of T. S. Eliot and Aldous Huxley. He won't get justice now—nothing could get him justice. Leonard Woolf, for example, in the *Nation*—a paper very friendly to India—said there was not a single quotation in my book which did not seem to him altogether worthless. But he ought to have seen the daemonic energy and fierceness of *Sea-Waves*, if of nothing else. A literature in which every poet was like T. S. Eliot and every novelist like E. M. Forster would be fairly arid. We do need less narrow canons of criticism.

I am sure that our worst mistake has been in caring so little about Indian thought and literature. They have a *right* to demand that we care what they think; and the fact of their political subordination makes them resent our contempt.

Muhammed Iqbal We have no Indian studies at Oxford, other than Sanskrit—and that less of literature than of grammar. The vernaculars are despised, are not considered serious studies—yet Sanskrit is dead, they are vigorous and developing. As a result, Indian intellectuals are now turning to the Continent—they are getting increasingly out of touch with us, and are forming connections with Scandinavia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy. This fact has even a political importance.

My disappointment over the loss of reputation that has come to Tagore is largely because he lost the best chance an Indian has ever had of getting a hearing from the West. He got the ear of England—and then lost it. He lost much more than his own battle. And he need not have lost it.

Like you, I am very sorry he did not get the Oxford degree. But that was a misunderstanding. There was no enthusiasm for him here, but the degree would have gone through all right. But Tagore thought a *rebuff* was likely and he preferred not to risk it. It is a pity, for an occasional F.R.S. or doctorate of Oxford or Cambridge would give him more pleasure than anything else. I wish they'd recognise Brajendralal Seal—I know he has a Knighthood, but I mean, at Oxford.

But I must not take up more of your time. I only want to say how grateful I am for your kind letter—and if I can I will look you up when I am in London. I know that no one did more for Tagore's hearing in the West—and I know that your interest in India has been lifelong and unwavering.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD THOMPSON.

I think, with Thompson, while we make over much of Maharajahs, too little curiosity is shown by English artists and scholars in the living culture of India.

When Sir Muhammed Iqbal, the most eminent among Muslim poets and philosophers, came over for the Indian Round Table Conference in 1931, little notice was taken of him, though one of his poems, the *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets

of the Self), written in classical Persian, has been translated into English by Professor R. A. Nicholson. He was a little sore that none of the English philosophers seemed aware of his presence in London.

‘When in Paris,’ he wrote to me later, ‘I met Bergson. We had extremely interesting conversation on philosophical subjects. “The substance of Berkeley’s philosophy”, he said, “is that in perception matter reveals the whole of itself without a remainder: not so the case with the mind.” This is a very interesting way of putting Berkeley. Our conversation lasted for two hours. Bergson is old and very ill. He does not see people, but was good enough to make an exception in my case. Unfortunately,’ he added, ‘the friend who accompanied him and made a record of the conversation, could not afterwards decipher his own handwriting!’

I had wished some of our English philosophers had given some of their time to this eminent visitor. Like other distinguished Indians, he was perturbed by the relations between England and his country. ‘I am glad’, he wrote again, ‘that you are keeping in touch with India. The great need of Asia is that the best minds of England should know her and understand the problems that arise out of her present awakening—problems on which in my opinion, depends the whole future of the British race and modern civilization. As you know literature is not and has never been a profession in India. Music and painting are professions to a certain extent; literature is not. I know this from personal experience. I have written something in the way of literature; but I have to earn my daily bread at the Bar. Indeed my rivals and other interested persons have always carried on a propaganda against me on account of my literary pursuits and tried all sorts of means to prejudice the men in authority against me in order to ruin my career as a professional man. In this they have succeeded so far. Please excuse this personal reference. I should have never mentioned it to a less sympathetic mind. However, I am happy to know that as one of the leaders of modern art you are in touch with the Viceroy of India who

A visit to Rapallo I am sure will appreciate the advice you give him from time to time. I hope to meet you again in 1935. The Rhodes Trustees have so kindly offered me through Lord Lothian the Rhodes lectureship. I shall have to deliver three or more lectures to the Oxford University. I was asked to come in April 1934; but it was not possible to do so for reasons which I wrote to Lord Lothian.'

Unfortunately, illness prevented Sir Muhamed Iqbal from delivering the lectures. Hindu thought is to some extent familiar, but few know anything of Muslim philosophy. Iqbal sent me a collection of his lectures on the subject, and I the more regretted that Oxford could not have the opportunity of doing honour to this eminent Indian thinker and poet.

During the winter early in 1926, I went with my daughter to Rapallo, for sun and warmth, and to be near Max and Florence Beerbohm. Up the steps of their villino I was carried each afternoon on to Max's roof terrace, when we gossiped and jested until laughter would overwhelm me each time. So painful was the effect of laughter, I would hesitate to start out; but Max was irresistible, and I missed no afternoon. Austen Chamberlain and his family were staying at our hotel, the Bristol; he, too, was recovering from illness, and we would lie out, side by side, in the garden of the hotel, chatting, reading, looking out on to the sea. Chamberlain, discussing books, confessed he had never been able to get through Tolstoi's *War and Peace*. Strange, I thought, for a Foreign Secretary. While Chamberlain was at the Bristol Hotel, Mussolini, being in the neighbourhood, came to pay him a visit. His car was driven from the station through the narrow Rapallo streets at breakneck speed. He was concerned that Austen Chamberlain had no detective attending him, and could not understand his polite refusal of one.

Staying at the hotel, too, was a young man, Adrian Stokes, with a blonde head chockful of ideas, very abstract ideas, I thought, and nearby in a villa above the hotel were our old friends the Hauptmanns. A villa in Italy. What sublimer pleasure for a German! And to all the good things of Italy,

the Hauptmanns added the good things of Germany, such repasts they had, such food and such wine! Alas, I was not in a state to do justice to their fare, but I could listen to Gerhart as he talked; he had not always ready expression for what he wanted to say, and my German was not equal to complex words and ideas; but we raised our glasses to one another every few minutes—*lieber Will, lieber Gerhart*—I but putting my lips to the glass, he drinking deep of the rich, golden Rhine wine. So we sat late, a bridge of talk and wine thrown twixt dinner and supper, a second feast which the Germans, solid drinkers and mighty trenchermen, could enjoy, but which my then feeble health would not allow me to join. My then feeble health! Lately Edward Halliday, who, on his way to Rome, looked after me as far as Rapallo, told me of the careful directions my doctor had given him in case I died on the way!

Hauptmann had now become Goethe-like, an Olympian figure, and when he strode down, in loud patterned plus-fours, from his villa into the town, hatless, his hair blown back from his high forehead, with his wife Marguerite, slender and elegant, by his side, he always commanded attention. Oddly enough, they and the Beerbohms had never met, although Florence had since her childhood revered Hauptmann. When they did meet, though Max spoke no German and Hauptmann no English, each recognized the genius of the other, and they became firm friends. Max, too, capacious of wine, could sit with Hauptmann at the board, while Florence translated the German poet's rich flow of talk, Max responding with gentle cooings and glowing looks. Hauptmann wrote warmly of his pleasure in this new friendship:

Kloster auf Hiddensee.

July 21st, 1926.

Dear friend Rothenstein,¹

The older one becomes, the less there remains in the sieve with which one sifts the sand. But the gold which remains only becomes the more valuable. When annoyed and de-

¹ The original letter is in German.

*The
Olympian
Haupt-
mann*

pressed by the wretchedness of the epoch, which begins to show everywhere, I think of men like you, or when you write us a few lines, we feel well and, despite all, life is worth living again. Dear Rothenstein: if there were more men like you, wretchedness would not get the better of humanity as much as it does. Yes, it was beautiful in Rapallo, and not least through your presence. I wish this winter could be like that again! That is our sincere wish.

You have brought us the connection with Beerbohm, take our special thanks for that. He also is one of the grains of gold which remained in the sieve. If Rapallo attracts me, Beerbohm has become an important factor in this with his constancy, his philosophy and his perfect form of existence. The hours in his house, the four of us at his round table, retain in Greta's and my memory their deep significance.

The beautiful books by Tagore arrived to-day. Many thanks! I feel a real, deep regret that I am unable to show you, especially you, more frequently some of my growing works, as there cannot be anybody with deeper understanding than you, and whose encouragement could be more valuable to me.

With deeply and heartily felt obligation to you and your family, especially with my best wishes for the success of the operation which Rachel has to undergo, I send you my greetings. My wife likewise sends you her greetings, soon she is going to write herself.

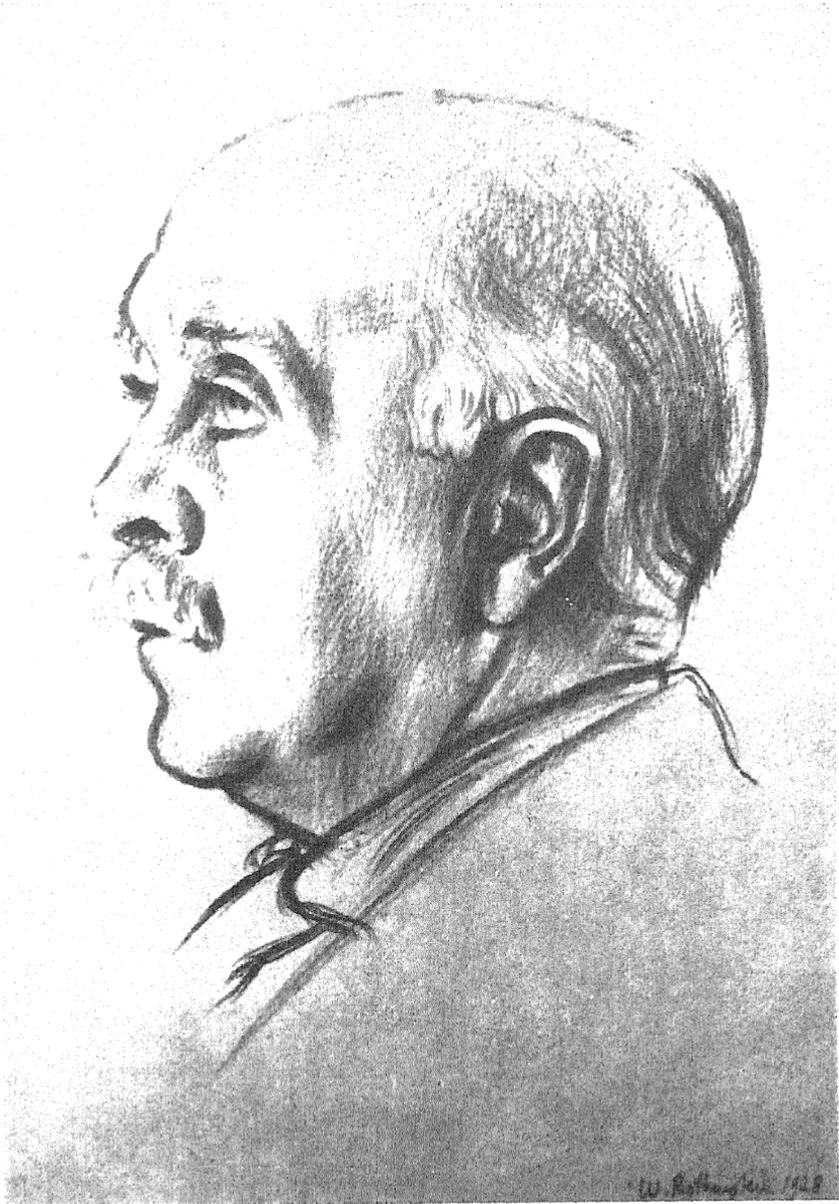
Ever yours,

GERHART HAUPTMANN.

While I was at Rapallo I heard from Robert Bridges:

My dear Rothenstein,

Thanks for writing to me. I was anxious to hear of your wellbeing—which however I have rather to assume from—than definitely read in your delightful letter. I hope that you are fully recovered. I know well the corners of the coast that you praise, Portofino, etc., having over 40 years ago wintered in those parts. Besides my friend and myself there was



SIR MAX BEERBOHM

no one in the hotel at Rapallo but an Italian artist, whose name I forget, who was always sketching at me on the sly. I would like now to get one of those old drawings—the nearer I approach my end the less I care what happens to the world, but if one had to live again on it, it would be a different concern. I do not see any decent solution or resolution of the present gang of things.

What you report of Hauptmann agrees with the notion I got of him from a photograph. 'Max' I never met—I discovered his unique merits in his very first brochure, but, with few exceptions, e.g. Tennyson and Roger Fry, I have cared less for the humour of his drawings than for his writing. The paper on Gosse, Browning and Ibsen is of his best, I think. As for Macartney's paintings, it gave me great pleasure to 'open' the show, since he was an old friend and I was very fond of him. I had no particular feeling for his easel, in my talk about him I deduced his life from his theory of intellectual activity! One press reporter on that occasion (I wonder if you saw it) exceeded the limit of impertinencies.

I am returning, with renewed thanks, the letters that you lent me for the handwriting book. All has gone well with it and I passed the last revise of the press yesterday. Fry wrote me good stuff for it. There has been no change in the plan, it is Tract XXII of our S.P.E. (Society). There are 34 full sized collotype plates. You will have a copy sent you as soon as it is out,—'very shortly'.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT BRIDGES.

I did not know of your family tie with Macartney. . . . Raleigh's letters¹ are wonderful. I think they will raise the general standard of letter writing.

Bridges had sent me his book, *New Poems*, and in another letter he speaks of his *Testament of Beauty* on which he was now occupied:

¹*Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, 1879-1922.

Bridges on
Max

Chilswell—Oxford.
May 3.

My Dear Rothenstein,

I am glad that you had a good time at Rapallo. And I thank you for writing and especially for your kindness in liking 'Kate's Mother'.

In order to prove my metrical invention I chose my first subjects as low as I could find them—a parrot and a nurse-maid. I knew that if they could voyage without mal de mer, my ship would weather anything, so I have been lading her up with philosophy. The first of my 'Testament' are in type (only first draft of course) and I should be glad that you should read them if you have any desire and leisure *and* if you would animadvert on them for my benefit.

I should not wish the poem to be shown to others. My fourth and final 'Book' which I am now hoping to work at will be on Ethic, and I fear it may not be so amenable to poetic disguise as the earlier part of my subject—still the more difficulty the more fun if the season is pleasant.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT BRIDGES.

Robert Bridges was also collecting letters for a second tract on handwriting.

My dear Rothenstein, he wrote,

I shall be going on with the Handwriting subject in another S.P.E. Tract this autumn. I hope you will help me to give some interesting specimens. You will see from the first instalment, in Tract XXIII, the sort of thing that is needed.

If you would write some artistic criticism of XXIII or general remarks for me to print on its successor I should be very much pleased.

I hope you are all well.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT BRIDGES.

I sent him a number of letters from which he chose two—one by Walter Crane and another by Edward Carpenter; but

I did not feel competent to write any criticism. The notes were supplied by Alfred Fairbank. *Edward Johnson*

Edward Johnson, for whom handwriting was even more important than for Bridges, had a whole philosophy of writing. To him handwriting has ever been a moral, almost a religious thing. As a writer of script he is a master. No one, to my mind, gives to script such masculine beauty, so vigorous a style; but to become involved in talk with him on this, indeed on any subject, is to find oneself in a close field of logic, from which one can escape only by physical departure; so tense, so tenacious is his grip.

Johnson's name is a familiar one abroad, especially in Germany where his book on writing, translated into German by Miss Anna Simons, is the standard authority. But Johnson's conscience and conscientiousness are such that to extract from him a piece of script means years of patience; his reasons for *not* doing a thing being as logical and conclusive as his reasons for doing them in one way only.

I stayed more than once with the Beerbohms at their vilino. Each time the Hauptmanns were at Rapallo too. I remember, on one occasion, a message came from the Hauptmanns—a motor launch was waiting, I must join them at once. We were to explore the coast thereabouts, and then lunch at Portofino. In the launch was a stranger, to whom I was introduced—Count Berchtold. A dandy, clearly, with mauve shirt and tie, and clothes almost matching, bright sleeve links in his cuffs and a bracelet on his wrist. We skirted the rocky coast past Portofino, landing to see a romantic villa at Paraggi, and then we passed in to the tiny harbour of Portofino; such blue water and such a tiny wrist-watch of a town—a single square of brightly painted houses merely. As we sat at lunch it dawned on me that Count Berchtold was the Austrian Minister who had launched the shameful ultimatum upon Serbia in 1914. I was shocked to think that this charming lightweight, with his easygoing attitude to life, should have been an instrument in bringing about the tragedy of the World War.

*The villain
of the play*

Seated in front of the *trattoria*, watching the bustling scene in the tiny square, I could not help thinking it was like a scene from a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, with sailors, customs officers, fishermen, bumboat-women, gendarmes, and, I thought, at our table, looking at Count Berchtold, we have the villain of the play!

But what a price poor Austria was paying for this initial blundering brutality towards Serbia! The punishment meted out was a tragedy, not for Austria alone, but for Europe, a tragedy of which many acts have yet to be played.¹ My wife and daughters cared deeply for Austria and the Austrians. I joined them one summer at Pertisau, a village high up beside a lake with mountains in the background, and here and there, attractive homesteads, half barn, half farmhouse, built of wood on strong stone bases, covered with heavy stone tiles.

In Pertisau we came on some excellent wood-carvings, a figure of Christ on the Cross, and a little beyond the village two life-size figures brightly coloured, the one of Christ, the other of the local saint, Saint Ethelberga. On a previous visit to Pertisau I admired, too, a small figure of the saint, carved in wood and coloured, crowning a little fountain. This I now missed. The charming medieval fountain had been replaced by a common zinc tank. Where was the lovely little figure? It had been thrown away, I was told, but a youth emerging from a stable nearby said he knew where the 'figure' was. Going back to the stable, he returned with the carving, badly damaged and rotten with damp, and the arms missing. The innkeeper was glad to dispose of it. On my return I had it treated at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and it is now the chief ornament of our cottage. Austria has many of these handsome village carvings, true works of peasant art. I hope they are mostly better cared for than this one, thrown into a stable to perish.

In every village stood a war memorial, so like our own,

¹ Since the above was written, the final act of the tragedy has been only too successfully played.

telling the same sad story of waste, of sturdy men dragged from their homes to live and die in misery in foreign countries. On returning home I wrote to Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, asking whether the time had not now come when we should, on Armistice Day, send representatives to enemy countries to stand side by side with their people to pay respect to their dead. Sir Herbert replied:

5, *Lennox Gardens,*
S.W. 1.

Nov. 14. 1925.

*Sir
Herbert
Richmond
replies*

My dear Rothenstein,

That we should resume friendship with those who were our enemies up to 10 years ago is a thing I most cordially support. When peace is made, the Peace should be real: and to be real it should do its utmost to create friendship and mark the end of war. That was what we tried to do after 1815; it was not what was tried in 1918.

But for all that I do not find it easy to criticize those who made the peace, except on the grounds that they were not greater men than God had made them. It was—I think it must have been—difficult to obliterate from their minds what had happened, what things those enemies had done in derogation of humanity. It was hard for any seamen to forget the brutalities of the submarine war, the sunk hospital ships, the broken word. That made the peacemaking difficult.

And that brings me to your letter. Can we not now forget that? Can we not now send our soldiers and sailors to Austria, to Germany and elsewhere to honour their dead?

I confess that I could do so to some of them. But I equally confess that if I were to be asked to go to honour the memories of men who did those things at sea which even now after ten years I cannot think of without abhorrence, I should have to refuse. For I could not go as a hypocrite. I could not go professing honour I do not feel. There are individual graves on which I should feel honoured by honouring—von Spee and his men for one. Those were gallant enem-

*Conditions
in Ger-
many*

ies. But to stand by a memorial erected to the memory of men like Valentin and others would be an act of such hypocrisy, so repellent to me, that I could not do it; nor could I ask anyone else to do what I would not do myself.

I have the greatest sympathy with your proposals that a peace pact shall be something more than talk: but there are things which I feel it is our duty to the future to condemn, and the acts at sea are among them.

I say nothing of other things on land. It is not that I have no news on the matter, but that I write rather of those things with which I have the most acquaintance.

I feel in complete friendship with the Germany of to-day. I should rejoice at a better feeling, at a removal of restrictions upon her national developments. But I cannot honour those of her people who acted as her submarine commanders acted, and whom, if I went to Germany, I should be honouring together with her other dead.

I am sorry such feelings still animate me. But such is my very imperfect nature.

Very sincerely, my dear Rothenstein,
Yours,

H. W. RICHMOND.

I admired the sanity and honesty of the admiral's reply; yet I was not entirely persuaded. The punishment we were administering was too long drawn out. Each time I went to Nauheim I saw with increasing concern the plight of the German people. Everywhere were signs of bankruptcy and depression. Always they looked to England for a long hoped for change; each time, with conference after conference, to be disappointed. Internal bitterness and strife were growing; in the villages we saw either swastikas or the hammer and sickle chalked up on the walls, and swastikas, I noticed, were painted in white on the apple trees along the roadside. Brown-shirted men began to appear at Nauheim; a procession of these was to march through the town, but was stopped and turned aside by the police. Kur-guests must not be alarmed.

On my return I spoke to Ramsay MacDonald of what we had seen and heard; I thought the Government could still do something, by way of giving more support to the Republic, to stop the calamity which was threatening. MacDonald had always been anxious to bring about less vexatious and fairer conditions for the German people. The difficulty was France's fear of Germany regaining her old power; not an unreasonable fear, as it turned out. Once rearmed, she would be the same dangerous, threatening Germany. One could understand France's position; but what was the statesman-like course? A Germany too long humbled and finally exasperated, or a self-respecting Republican Germany, brought back into the European family? Our French friends were a little cynical regarding our more disinterested attitude: we had destroyed the German navy, and taken the German Colonies; replete, we could afford to appear good-natured.

CHAPTER VII

JOHN SARGENT AS PAINTER

*Character
of Sargent*

THOUGH I had seen little of Sargent of late years his death came as a shock. Certain men seem to be an essential part of their age, like principals and purlins to a roof, and when one of these goes, and Sargent was one, it is as though one of the supports can not be replaced. Here was a man, indifferent to fame and fortune, for both came to him early (accepted as a normal part of life), who had known everyone in the great world in which he took his place, modestly, yet as by right. I think of his huge frame, of his superb appetite, his constant consumption of cigars; of his odd shyness too, and self-consciousness, of his decided opinions expressed with a Jamesian defensiveness. He was never quite at his ease, either in his own studio or among his friends; it was only with his mother and sisters he shed his reserves. His studio was characteristically cosmopolitan with its Venetian mirrors, Coromandel screens, French and Italian furniture, and its studies by Monet, Mancini and Helleu hung in the passages. I doubt whether he ever cared much for English painters, except Charles Furse. Though a familiar figure in the great English houses, he remained a cosmopolitan. Sargent was the last of the painters who could do anything to which he set his hand; but his first conceptions were seldom fine enough to assure a wholly satisfying result, however brilliant and honourable his means. He lacked a final artistry. Yet artistry has much to answer for through its association with limited capacities. If the old standards could have been preserved, one might have had artistry combined

with fine craftsmanship. But there came a separation between the two, which ended in divorce.

*Neglected
chances*

When Evan Charteris' excellent book on Sargent appeared, I heard from him in answer to some comments I made on Sargent's work. Charteris replied:

96a Mount Street,
Grosvenor Square, W.

Dear Professor Rothenstein,

First let me say how very kind I think it was on your part to write—and then how truly I value your expression of approval—That one should not have distorted his likeness, but on the contrary given a recognisable resemblance to those who knew him and understood him—reconciles one (indeed does much more) to the difficulties one encountered in compiling the book.

I agree entirely with what you say about him as an artist—he does not convey the 'lacrimae rerum', and robust as he was, he was little aware of them. But as you say, it is idle to seek for what isn't there, and anyway nothing can alter the splendour of his achievement.

Yours sincerely,

EVAN CHARTERIS.

Yes, Sargent's gifts were great, though not of the highest order; and he made superb and honourable use of them. He was early trained in a rigid and logical method of constructive painting, and this method he continued to follow, perfecting it but not changing it, throughout his career. In this he was fortunate. Most of us disliked and deserted the ways in which we were taught, and must painfully acquire methods of our own, and thereby waste much time and many canvases. I, for example, failed to follow the teaching of Legros, my first master, resisted the academic training I could have got from Jules Lefevre and Doucet, failed to carry to their conclusion the profounder influences of Whistler and Degas, and later, when more aware of my real purpose, I had to teach myself what I might have learned earlier—no

*Neglected
chances*

doubt the reason why my later works are less adventurous than my earlier ones. But how easy when a painter is no longer taught his art as an artisan his trade, to take a wrong turning and to follow a doubtful road. Left overmuch to our own resources we incline towards experiment. The physicist, the chemist, however long he may follow some hypothesis which seems to point to a hopeful conclusion, scraps his theory when it fails to stand by any and every test. Aesthetic experiments may also prove fallacious and must likewise be abandoned. Paris is the great school for daring artistic initiative. The difficulty I feel regarding the tendencies explored in the Paris studios is the enormous claim made for their significance. I recently attended a lecture by an eminent French authority on contemporary painting in Paris, whose complacency regarding the experimental artists, his assumption that the painters whose witty, entertaining, and over-simplified works he illustrated on the screen were the equals of Ingres, Delacroix, Daumier and Degas, made me feel acute discomfort. None the less, if some of the experimental essays may have to be scrapped, that does not mean they are to be condemned. When some public speaker raises a cheap laugh at their expense, I feel angry and ashamed as many then must. The invention of new styles, a succession of which has come from Paris, has given a fresh impetus to all the arts of design, to interior decoration and to book-production and illustration. A purely abstract art may well return to its natural territory and once again become particular to carpets, textiles, and objects of use and ornament. Was it not Matthew Arnold who observed that great work needs the man and the ripe time? I remember Ricketts saying how embarrassing it would be if a great painter suddenly appeared; how foolish we should feel, what poor figures we should cut! Ricketts was quick to respond to so much that was excellent in the arts; no one more sensitive and intelligent. If he and Shannon were not men of genius, at least they knew what company to frequent; if there was no great painter alive to take them as apprentices, they could at

least apprentice themselves to the best masters of the past. Highly gifted as they were, like the rest of us they belonged to a period of decline. I think that Ricketts in his heart knew this. With his acute intelligence, his appreciation of the early work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones, of Watts and Whistler, of Delacroix, Daumier and Puvis de Chavannes, he must have measured Shannon's and his own work in relation to these. At the same time he knew that, compared with their immediate contemporaries, they stood for a more dignified, a richer content, a more scholarly use of their material. Shannon could interpret the grace and distinction of women; but his painting is, I think, too suave, lacks hardness and firmness of construction, shows insufficient interest in visual appearance. Like Ricketts, he based his work overmuch on scholarly appreciation of past masters. The great wave of nineteenth-century art had receded, as earlier in poetry the fierce fire of the Elizabethans had grown cold. John alone had the power to revive the fire; he threw a mighty armful of fuel on to the ashes, a bright flame shot up, but the time was not yet; he lacked the staying power to continue feeding it and the flame died down. Steer doesn't believe in fire and flames. He goes on his way quietly, seeing to it that there is a regular supply of heat and light, enough for a modest household.

CHAPTER VIII

FLOOD AT THE TATE

*Painters
and
scholars*

THERE are two private picture galleries at Richmond, Sir Herbert Cook's, and Lord Lee of Fareham's,¹ where one can examine paintings leisurely. Maurice Brockwell looks after the works at Doughty House and entertains, in Sir Herbert Cook's² absence, in the grand manner. After dinner the guests wander about the galleries. I like to get the views of experts in front of the actual works and discuss their qualities and condition. For generalized art criticism I care less. I used to enjoy visiting the galleries in Florence with Bernhard Berenson, but unfortunately my learned friends like rather to exchange opinions with one another than with a mere painter. Yet painters, even if they have not the expert knowledge of these eminent scholars, have another kind of knowledge that comes through practice, as well as strong intuitive feelings in front of paintings. I suggested to Ramsay MacDonald, when he was Prime Minister, that among the Trustees at the National Gallery there should be one painter at least. He agreed and the President of the Royal Academy was made a Trustee. MacDonald himself was appointed to a trusteeship by Baldwin in 1928 and two years later Baldwin was appointed by MacDonald. Neither had any marked technical knowledge of paintings, still less the time to attend the meetings.

One of the first things which encouraged me to believe

¹ Lord Lee has now moved his collections to Avening, in Gloucestershire, where he has built a gallery to house them.

² Sir Herbert Cook died during 1938.

that I could still be of use after my long illness, was a letter from Mr Baldwin, then Prime Minister, appointing me a Trustee of the Tate Gallery. This I owed largely to Charles Aitken, then Director of the Tate. I had admired Aitken ever since, in 1900, he took charge of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, where he arranged some of the best picture exhibitions to be seen at that time in London. He was quick to recognize new talent; he first drew my attention to a painting by Gilbert Spencer, then still at the Slade School, when he was acquiring works for the Gallery by some of the younger artists. Some deemed this a doubtful policy, seeing that young men might well wait until they had proved their early promise. But Aitken, no less aware of the qualities of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, saw to it that Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown and some of the minor Victorians, Boyd Houghton and Windus, for example, were well represented at Millbank. He was, moreover, skilled at getting gifts for the Gallery and knew what gifts to ask for—from me he charmed away one of my best John drawings! Scrupulously honest, broadminded, willing to take advice (and, what is rarer, to acknowledge its source), once convinced, he held fast. Inevitably a director with an independent character will support independent artists, many of whose works were now hung at the Tate, while Aitken was less sympathetic towards some of the purchases made by the Academy through the Chantrey Bequest. Hence, for a time there was a deadlock between the Academy and the Tate Trustees and no further Chantrey purchases were made. When the difference was finally adjusted the Director (then J. B. Manson) and two Trustees, I being one, again joined the small committee which recommended works for purchase. We were of some service in proposing works which would not have commended themselves so readily to the Academy Council, among them Gilbert Spencer's fine 'Farm yard'. I was keen that Tonks's attractive interior of Moore, Steer, a lady and himself should be acquired for the Tate through the Chantrey fund. The proposal was well received by the Chantrey

*A Tonks
for the
Tate* committee of the Academy, but Orpen had already bought the painting. Then I heard from MacColl:

My dear William Rothenstein,

Did I tell you that after talking it over with Tonks, Orpen has handsomely promised to leave the George Moore group in his will for the Tate? You have the satisfaction of having set the ball rolling.

Yours ever,

D. S. MACCOLL.

After Orpen's death the painting went to the Tate, of which it is one of the ornaments. I was not always happy about the choice of paintings by the committee, since I believed Chantrey's intention was to provide funds for acquiring ambitious works unlikely to find private purchasers. True, little work of this kind is now attempted, or successfully carried through; none the less I felt that in recommending small canvases which anyone might buy we were not attending to the terms of Chantrey's will, solemnly read out to us whenever we met at Burlington House.

During 1927 a Royal Commission on Museums was set up, before which, among others, I was asked to appear. In the course of my evidence I submitted that examples of the best contemporary furniture and other domestic objects should be available in museums, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, so that people wishing for well-made things might see what can be provided to-day. I described the usual house of the 'man of taste', complete with Coromandel screen, Chippendale chairs, Han and Ming pottery, acquired at expensive 'antique' shops and at Christie's. As I was leaving, Evan Charteris, who was a member of the Committee, pulled me by the sleeve and said, 'a wicked description of my own house!'

About this time Aitken rang me up early one Sunday morning. The lower rooms of the Tate were flooded! I hurried down to Millbank, where a strange scene met my eyes. Scattered over the floors of the galleries were hundreds of

Turner's drawings; among them sketch books of every size and shape, while paintings, brought up from below, were stacked against the walls. Aitken had been up all night, wading in water which was knee high, rescuing canvases and precious drawings, and was now exhausted. With Manson and Ede, all looking white and worn, he was still hard at work, salvaging and arranging things along the floor. Sir Robert and Lady Witt, Sir Augustus Daniel and Arthur Hind were busy helping, and I quickly joined them with as many members of the family as were at home, separating the leaves of sketch books, drying each between sheets of blotting paper, drying watercolours likewise. It was surprising that the colour of these last didn't run, remained firm. Messengers were sent out to procure more blotting-paper; this being Sunday the shops were shut. All through the day every one toiled, until the last sodden drawing was dried. Finally, when the drawings were counted, not one was missing! Later the drawings were sent to the Print Rooms of the British and Victoria and Albert Museums to be cleaned and pressed. Only a few were found to be affected by their drenching. Among the oil paintings submerged, a Turner was seriously damaged; and oddly enough, a small canvas of mine of a Normandy Farm, recently acquired through the Duveen Fund and lent to the Tate.

Aitken was severely censured from more than one quarter. Though he had drawn attention to danger from an unusually high tide, he had been assured officially that there was no risk to the Tate. Afterwards precautions were taken against a repetition of this disaster; but it took Aitken long to recover from the distress and strain he went through.

I regularly attended the Trustees' meetings at Millbank, but disliked having to oppose the purchase of works by contemporaries when I did not think them good enough or not the best examples. Moreover, the prices asked, and sometimes given, for foreign works, rather shocked me. Having known the small prices at which Manets, Cézannes and Renoirs could be acquired during the nineties, I have never

*A letter to
Lord
D'Abernon*

got used to the fantastic sums the dealers now demand, nor to the large sums asked, and paid, for slight works by Matisse and Picasso. I accordingly wrote to Lord D'Abernon, the Chairman of the Tate Trustees:

1st May, 1928.

Dear Lord D'Abernon,

Some weeks ago I had a letter from Jacques Blanche, grumbling because the Tate had rejected his beautiful bathing women by Renoir. He wrote that he got three times the sum he asked from America. He appeared to think the Tate Trustees had behaved foolishly.

Is it not desirable that this kind of misunderstanding should be corrected? The Luxembourg authorities have long since let it be known that artists can only expect small sums in payment for works it is desired to add to the national collection by foreigners. It is looked on as a distinction to be represented at the Luxembourg, and Whistler, for instance, accepted 3,000 francs for the picture of his mother. There does not seem any reason why it should not be looked on as a similar honour for a foreigner to be represented at Millbank. But the old legend of English wealth still remains, and it might be as well if some definite pronouncement were made as to the very limited funds at the disposal of the Trustees. Further, it was owing to the generosity of a private donor, Sir Edmund Davis, that a collection of modern English paintings was offered to the Luxembourg Gallery. Might we not look for similar generosity on the part of foreign patrons of art, not, of course, as a rule, but at least as a possibility?

There would be no harm in allowing it to be known, in days in which important works of art are extremely costly, how warmly an important example of a great foreign painter would be welcomed in England: otherwise there is a risk of a foreign collection being made up of minor examples, though happily we have generous donors like Mr Courtauld in this country.

You might think it worth while to bring up the matter at one of the meetings.

My painter colleagues, Walter Russell and Francis Dodd, held a similar view, and the other Trustees thought the proposal a reasonable one. But when the National Art Collections Fund favoured the acquisition of a gouache by Picasso for £4,000, and were willing to contribute a substantial sum if the Trustees considered its purchase desirable, I decided to resign. Some one more sympathetic to such transactions must take my place. But this was later. There are two things connected with my trusteeship I remember with satisfaction: the proposal I made to bring together a collection of Burne-Jones's work and again for an exhibition at the Tate of the paintings of a living artist, Wilson Steer. This prepared the way for showing a collection of the work of an eminent living artist from time to time; an exhibition of Henry Tonks's paintings and drawings was held during the painter's lifetime, and no doubt in future other artists will be thus honoured.

It was Ernest Thomas who reminded me of the coming centenary of Burne-Jones, and I at once put the project of a Centenary Exhibition before my fellow Trustees at the Tate Gallery. None of them were in love with Burne-Jones's work, but his place among nineteenth-century artists was acknowledged, and the project went through. There was considerable difficulty in tracing his more important works, even with the help of the Mackails, who were opposed to the plan, Mrs. Mackail deeming the time not yet come when justice would be done to her father's life-work. Lady Horner, too, was doubtful of the wisdom of a show at this time. Actually, the exhibition proved a great attraction. At the opening there was a gathering of the old Grosvenor clan—T. M. Rooke, Graham Robertson, Forbes Robertson, Mrs G. F. Watts, May Morris, Mrs Benson, Mrs Gaskell, Lady Horner, William Michael Rossetti's daughters, and the Mackails. Mr Baldwin was to open the exhibition; a few minutes before the time, a message came that Mr Baldwin wanted a word with me. I found him glistening pale; never had he felt more nervous, he explained. 'But Mr Baldwin,'

Mr Baldwin's nervous- said I, 'you with your experience!' 'Yes, but it is always so
ness with me before speaking.' A slight nervousness was indeed
apparent when he began, which quickly gave place to a quiet
assurance. I have rarely heard a speech of greater charm.

CHAPTER IX
LAWRENCE AND THE ENEMY

IT was after Lawrence, on joining the Air Force, took the name of Shaw that *The Seven Pillars* at last appeared. I was enthusiastic about the writing; who indeed was not, unless it were Lawrence himself? In reply to a letter in which I told him of my admiration for this great work of his, but not for the form or the make-up of the book itself, he replied:

*The Seven
Pillars*

Karachi.

5. 5. 27.

Dear Rothenstein,

Your letter contained so much hearty and high kicking that I'm sure you are well again: but you say nothing about your health, and in England I used to hear that a long illness was pursuing you. Let's hope you have got the better of the brute, whatever it was.

About my writing you are over-kind. I don't think much of it. My style is a made-up thing, very thickly encrusted with what seemed to me the tit-bits and clever wheezes of established authors. So, for book-learned people, threading it constantly, but not too sharply, tickles their literary memory, by half-reminding them of half-forgotten pleasures. There isn't any good, or permanence, in such a derivative effort.

For the brutality of the plates I must plead guilty. The politeness of margin makes me very angry. Kennington's page pastels could be ruled down, so, into normal pictures; but by running them out to the edge they jumped out of the

Lawrence on Lewis book, and re-became monstrous, and their originals. John and the rest (including you) had to follow suit, in self-defence. It was my deliberate intention to make the pictures appendices, not illustrations, and to rouse with them just the feelings you expressed. Regard my *Seven Pillars* as a protest against the illustrated book, and you'll feel what I am driving at.

I have a great regard for Wyndham Lewis, the critic: and daily expect his Shakespeare book, which Mrs Shaw is sending me. I wonder what his new review, which you mention, is? Out here one hears nothing of England. He and T. S. Eliot, and Robert Graves, and Sassoon, and E. M. Forster, and D. H. L.: Oh, we have a lot of decent fellows yet!

Yours,

T. E. SHAW.

Lawrence, so certain of what he wanted when he was planning, was oddly uncertain of himself, I noticed, when criticized for anything he had done. Now illustrations without margins were coming into fashion. To me it seemed a detestable fashion, and I said so to Lawrence. Instead of defending the new method, which has now, in fact, become general, he explains apologetically it was to make Kennington's pastels look 'monstrous', so the rest of us must follow suit. But his text had margins; and the illustrations within the text were well placed. The new review to which he referred was Wyndham Lewis's *Enemy*. This I sent out to him and soon after came a further letter:

Karachi.

12. 5. 27.

Dear Rothenstein,

Hot foot by the next mail appeared the enemy! Wyndham Lewis has done it very well: much better than *the Lion and the Fox*, which was a falling short after *the Art of Being Ruled*. I thought X rather small game for him to gun at. He will be forgotten five years hence.

But on people like Pound, and Gertrude Stein, and Joyce, he's extraordinarily interesting. I wish he would let himself go properly over the whole area of modern letters, and tell us where he places D. H. Lawrence, and Forster, and Graves and Sassoon and all the rest of the people who write. There is so much being written, and so few guides to help occasional visitors to books through the masses of them.

*The second
Enemy*

However, perhaps he will carry it on. If the *Enemy* is successful it may encourage him to branch out into criticism. I take it his creative side, which produced *Tarr* so long ago, has dropped off withered.

It was very good of you to send it out. Don't you think the cover-design, the Tartar horseman, very beautiful?

Yours,

T. E. S.

How direct and to the point Lawrence's letters were! On getting the second number of *The Enemy* he wrote again:

Karachi.

8. 12. 27.

Dear Rothenstein,

Many thanks for the second *Enemy*. He digresses too much in it; so that there is almost no main argument. If he would send his ideas one by one to the weekly press as they occur to him—then what a critic he would be. The background of a general idea, some vague bogey of a time-spirit, would then give depth and strength to his writing. He cuts Miss Mayo wholly to bits: but then she is easy meat. He goes fairly for Sherwood Anderson, who is more his size. I think he is convincing there: but I do not know all S. A.'s work. Then he goes for D. H. Lawrence, whose boots he is not big enough to wear. He does not seem to have read much Lawrence, so far as I can see. He criticizes only some pages of his little *Mornings in Mexico*, which are just the snap-shots of a literary artist, in the slack time while waiting for a subject—the same way as a barber snips his empty

*The second
Enemy*

scissors all the time he is moving the comb, and preparing a new grip on an uncut lock of hair. Just the maintenance of a vital rhythm. I'd like, immensely, to see W. Lewis tackling such a thing as D. H. L.'s *Plumed Serpent*, an immense and significant book. A fundamental criticism of that would be wonderful reading. Only he would have to forget his time-spirit obsession. There will not be a new time-spirit till the implications of Einstein have entered the new generation with its mother's milk—say about 1960 or so. We are Newtonians yet.

Yet Lewis is a first-rate brain, and a very good artist, surely? His drawings impress me with their power. They are really fine, I fancy. Isn't it odd to like all that a man does, and to dislike, almost vehemently, all that he likes? Or is that a natural consequence of living in his generation? Your work will be exactly dateable to your epoch, in the eyes of the future: as will the work of all your contemporaries. The most academic of them, and the most fiercely revolutionary, will all be 1880-1930 . . . isn't that odd? What are these 50 years of a man's production, if his own time takes such possession of him? I think, mainly, that it means that any search of endeavour after *difference* (as an end in itself) is wasted effort.

Miss Gertrude Bell's letters came to me: they are very good—but so on the surface as to be impalpably unsatisfying. Only twice did I feel that she had got actually down to anything. She was born too gifted, perhaps.

The death of Hogarth hit me very hard. Oxford was to me a beautiful place, and a home, because he lived there, for me to see for a few minutes whenever I passed. I did not want to delay there: but I did like to see and hear him just for a moment. And he takes most of his richness into the grave with him, because he did not express many sides of himself on paper. A great loss: the greatest, perhaps, or probably, that I'll ever have to suffer.

Yours,

T. E. S.

Yes, to my belief too Lewis has a first-rate brain and is a good artist. He was one of the conceivers of the cubist movement, perhaps the most powerful among them. Moreover, Lewis happens to be a wolf in wolf's clothing, who uses his pen as powerfully as he uses his brush. As a critic he is no doctrinaire, advocating this or that aesthetic attitude. He says plainly, regarding the present experimental phases: here we have a fresh idiom. Let us use it freely to discover what increase of expression it can give to the language, of art or of literature. Not to use it may be to neglect a powerful medium. But he is ruthless, when he sees, with that terrible hard eye, the idiom used to give a modish appearance to a canvas, to cloak a want of thought or of clarity in writing. His paintings at times, obviously experimental, have a nervous energy, but at his best they stir, like the sounds of a gong, with a strange power.

He once compared my drawings with his own.

'I went to see your show two days ago and watched with the greatest interest your renderings of the various people that I know. I go primarily for the pattern of the structure of the head and insinuate, rather than stress, the "psyche". You, on the contrary, have I think here and there lost yourself a little in your psychology, as witness your T. S. Eliot. I did not even recognize it at first. But how interesting that you should see Tom like that! I liked most perhaps that admirable drawing of Blunden. But all the heads, each in its way (the way of the psyche of the sitter) interest me extremely.'

It is not only the pattern of the structure of the head that Wyndham Lewis gives in his personal way, but of the figure too. There is a nervous power of line in his drawings, an element of baroque in his forms, which gives them a quality apart. It is the something vacillating, disintegrating in much of contemporary painting, which disturbs me. Lewis's *Men Without Art* contains the best contemporary writing on art and on the problems and conditions artists and writers have to face to-day that I know. Fry, likewise an able writer, but a less profound critic than Lewis, was dazzled by the intellec-

Fry dictating tual aspect of cubism and kindred movements; gifted with a Cambridge-Euclidian sense of dialectic and skill in demonstration, he was accepted in England as the official exponent of the 'fauves', of whom Cézanne was the source (how surprised and dismayed Cézanne would be at the sight of the strange offspring which claims him as father!), and Matisse, Picasso and Braque the exponents. Fry had an infectious enthusiasm; but he was disingenuous and was too closely associated with a group of artists whose interests he was eager to advance to be a disinterested or impartial critic. I bear in mind his attitude over the so-called Holbein portrait of Henry VIII, the authenticity of which was challenged by Gerald Kelly and myself in *The Times*, also by Tonks and Wilson Steer. Fry attacked us with venom. He could not bear that mere painters should express an opinion on a painting, yet his authority was insufficient to establish its genuineness and the so-called Holbein was withdrawn to the obscurity of a small provincial gallery. Clive Bell, who really enjoys pictures, good and bad, supported Roger, saying that Tonks and myself were not artists at all, only Steer having a right to an opinion. How entertaining it would be if physicists like Eddington, Jeans, Bragg and Rutherford were told they were not scientists at all, Jeans perhaps being the exception! I am yet envious of the genius of these eminent men; of the patient concentration of their research and their daring conceptions. Artists for long had similar concentration, equally soaring imaginations, together with high technical accomplishment. Then the men of science were the unprecise thinkers, the inapt practitioners, the undisciplined theorists. Alas, that the position should now be reversed! The theory of significant form is a comfortable one, at a time when good painting is almost a lost art, when facility of composition is, with few exceptions, beyond the power of the contemporary painter. Form to-day is significant enough, significant of incapacity. Some hope I see in surrealism; for the surrealists are showing, together with much silliness and indecency, a renewed respect for their materials,



THE ARTIST'S HAND
by Michael Rothenstein

for some beauty of surface, and a return to inventiveness in their paintings. Surrealism, of course, had its great English forerunner in Blake; and before it appeared in France, Thomas Lowinsky painted and perfected what might almost be called surrealist pictures. Lately Lowinsky has shown another kind of originality in a small number of women's portraits. These are done with an intense probing into shapes—of feature, hair and dress, uncommon even in the Flemish and Italian primitives. He has devised a fastidious technique which allows of his painting *à premier coup* with a patient concentration peculiar to himself! But critics and connoisseurs only discover what they expect to find and the unusual qualities which distinguish Lowinsky's paintings are passed by.

A number of Ambrose McEvoy's paintings were shown the year after his death (he died during 1927) at Burlington House. An unequal painter—which of us is not?—in some of his portraits of women, and of children, he approached Gainsborough in his sensitiveness; his portraits in water-colour, too, are exquisite. The art critic of *The Times* wrote disparagingly of McEvoy's work. I sent a letter to *The Times* appreciative of McEvoy as a painter. An art critic is apt to resent such intrusion on his own field. Yet I think it were well if, from time to time, hospitality could be given in the press to some one other than the habitual critic. All books which appear year after year—novels, biographies and histories, essays, epics and lyrics—are seldom reviewed by a single critic. If a literary critic is attached to a newspaper, as Desmond MacCarthy is, for instance, to *The Sunday Times*, at least he chooses a single book for review each week. I do not doubt that those who write on paintings and other works of art would like more space for their reviews in the daily press; moreover, the number of exhibitions to-day which call for notice must stand in the way of sustained criticism.

During 1927 a number of my paintings were shown at Reid and Lefevre's Gallery in King Street. This led to the

renewal of an old friendship. For Lady Cowdray, going to the Gallery, bought two of the paintings. Henceforward, until her death, Lady Cowdray was a generous, an unflinching friend and supporter. She acquired many of my pictures, both for Paddockhurst, her house in Sussex, and for Dunecht. In her London house, in Carlton House Terrace, were some notable works, among them a full-length portrait of Mrs Huth by Whistler. It is regrettable that so few of Whistler's paintings, scarcely a dozen of his more important canvases, remain in England. On account of this rarity, perhaps, the present generation ignores Whistler's *œuvre*, the great part he played, the great figure he was, in the story of nineteenth-century art. Strange that Wilde, who was reckoned, and reckoned himself, but a small figure beside Whistler, and of whom Whistler made such cruel fun, should have become world famous.

But during the present century attention has been focussed on French painting—at least on painting done in France. In my early days, we also were propagandists for Degas, Manet, Monet and Puvis de Chavannes; admirers, likewise, of Renoir and Cézanne, though we did not give to the last two the places to which they have since risen. Yet we cared, at the same time, for English painters, for Hogarth, Gainsborough, Crome, Turner and Constable, for the early Rossetti, Alfred Stevens and, above all, among living painters, for Whistler. There is something to be said for fashion which allows of concentration on a more limited field. But men and women of fine taste do not follow the extremer forms of fashion. The fifty-shilling tailor's cut is more 'fashionable' than the Savile Row tailor's. So there are fashionable paintings which are more 'modern' looking than truer, more modest, works of art.

'The epithets of genius', wrote a great critic, 'are exactly the epithets *de tout le monde*, but good to an excellent degree—making the common as though it were not common, in sublimating the ordinary language terrestrial into the seventh heaven.'

There is this, too, to be said. A work which aims at being purely aesthetic but which fails, has no further interest; while a painting or drawing with other aims beside that of pure beauty, representative, or imaginative or informing, may find a niche in the temple.

*The purely
aesthetic*

CHAPTER X

DIFFICULTIES OF PAINTERS

*Friendship
with
Blanche*

THOUGH my relations with Paris, now that Rodin, Degas, Fantin-Latour were no longer alive, had become slender, I kept up my friendship with Jacques Blanche, and through him remained in touch with things French. Like myself, he preferred the painting of the older generation to that of recent years. He was, moreover, somewhat bitter at the lack of consideration he met with from the younger painters, which was the more distressing to him, since he could appreciate many aspects of their work. Indeed, with his alert and curious mind, he was attracted to many phases of art and of life too, and his social position gave him an entry into all the strata of French society. An illuminating talker, as he was a writer, he was a welcome guest whenever he was in London. Always charming to young people, he took a fancy to my son John, whom he asked to stay with him in France. Later he wrote to me:

*Offranville,
Seine Inférieure.
12th Aug. 1927.*

Dear Rothenstein,

Do you realise—as I wish you did—what a delightful boy John Rothenstein is? Of course you do. But I cannot refrain telling you and your wife to what extent my wife, our guests and myself enjoyed his visit. When he left us this morning we felt like people whose child goes on a long journey; just what he *wickedly* told us he was going to do, the moment we were contemplating other visits he could have paid us whenever he felt inclined. I believe John and I dur-

ing the past fortnight have discussed more things, people, facts, books, works of art and *ideas*, if you please, than ordinary people, living in the same town, can afford within ten years. The dear chap does not dislike holding forth, nor I either. And this house is the realm of books, meditation, silence, work.

*Friendship
with
Blanche*

Awful weather, but mild; and the flowers in the garden! I am telling you more than I should, if John had not so emphatically declared he was incapable of depicting to his parents his present surroundings. He sat to me for a sketch I did. I hope you will think it very *like*. The paint is not quite dry, therefore, the canvas will be sent over to you later on. It is *yours*, mind you, not John's.

In spite of ghastly pouring rain, John had a few motor trips. A whole day he spent in Rouen with a French boy, the son of a friend of ours, who studies at Cambridge.

You perhaps heard about the four large galleries, in the Musée,¹ that a kind mayor (he went off his head soon after) granted me, to keep my works. Rouen is the city where my family lived for two centuries. In the future, I intend making numerous alterations, and adding many important canvases to the studies for portraits. I already have given 50 Sickerts, my portraits by Sargent, Forain, Simon; a Cottet; four Helleus (landscapes), too glad to make sure these would not be sold for a few francs when I am gone. Do you not agree that the fate of portraits is rather pathetic, unless the name of the artist be such a famous one that no change in public opinion could possibly prevent them from falling into oblivion?

The other day I wrote to dear old Thomas Hardy, pointing out that his portrait (not the sketch I have in the Tate) should go to some public gallery, in *England*.² You remember, the Committee (Mr Debenham's) decided upon the sketch as more 'modern', as you may guess! But the more elaborate one, the rejected one, no doubt is far superior.

¹ The Musée de Rouen.

² Now in the Manchester City Art Gallery.

*Excess of
portraits*

Degas often said he would like to purchase it. John thinks you and I are in about the same position in the eyes of the youngsters and of the Academic Breed. It is not always a very easy one. . . .

Give my respects to your wife and believe me,
ever yours sincerely,

J. E. BLANCHE.

A year previously my son John produced a large volume on my portrait drawings for which Max Beerbohm wrote an enchanting preface. I wondered, in reference to what Blanche writes of the fates of portraits, whether it is altogether undeserved, thinking no harm would be done and some good, if a proportion of the dark and dreary portraits which encumber the walls of many public buildings, could be disposed of, even for a few francs. I do not often see a portrait, except in a private house, so painted and so framed as to add beauty to a room. Portraits hung across panels in heavy, ill-proportioned frames such as one sees in most Oxford and Cambridge Halls and Common Rooms, are especially disfiguring. As a record of an individual, a drawing may be as satisfactory, and as lasting, as a painting, while its cost is insignificant. But most figure-painters depend on portraits for a living; for unless work is popular with dealers, it is often hard for artists to earn enough to defray the cost of models, frames and material. I have been fortunate in that first my brother, Charles, and then Lady Cowdray, bought many of my paintings. But since Lady Cowdray's death I can affirm that but for occasional portrait commissions, each year's painting scarcely brought me a scavenger's wage. So I know the difficulties with which artists, except a few favoured by fortune, have to contend. Hence an urge to prod public authorities to make more use of artistic talent. A few architects, sculptors and painters obtain large fees for their work, even for their advice, but there are many mature and experienced men, as well as young and untried ones, ready to undertake interesting tasks for a reasonable reward. Surely the more work offered and carried out the better. The

highly-paid artists would not suffer from this wider adventure. So at least it seems to me, though I have been reproved by an eminent architect for supporting modestly paid projects on the part of public authorities, in his view to be discouraged.

In spite of this, during Ramsay MacDonald's premiership, I wrote to him on more than one occasion, hoping something could be done for the brightening of some of our dreary buildings. There have been plenty of decorations glorifying kings and princes; why could we not follow the example of Holland in the seventeenth century and have records of gatherings, of scientific and of medical men, statesmen, civic authorities, of trades union leaders, instead of the inevitable portraits of individual big-wigs in whom few would be interested in fifty years' time? 'My dear Rothenstein,' he replied, 'thank you very much for both the old and the new letter. I am very much concerned with the point that you raise. The problem is how can we put those feelings into effective action? The art genius of our people is having no outlet at all, because, as you say, everything is running into money and money value. It is the hard drudging life of detail that so many of us are living that is killing that spontaneity and good humour, which are so essential to a sound civilization. If something could be devised to give expression to that, nobody would welcome it more than myself. Nor would anybody give it more hearty assistance. I confess, however, that it has defied me up to now. The weight of my other burdens has perhaps prevented me from giving thought that somebody or other must give to it.' Alas, it has defied others besides Ramsay MacDonald, yet it did not defy American statesmen. When the great slump came in America, urgent orders were sent to the different states to employ artists, hitherto dependent on private patronage, for the decoration of public buildings. Any artists might volunteer for such work; as a consequence a large number of mural paintings were carried out in the different States.

CHAPTER XI

'THE RESURRECTION'

*Max as
talker*

WHEN Max Beerbohm and Ramsay MacDonald met they at once liked one another. Busy as Ramsay MacDonald was, if he heard Max was to be with us, he would join us if he could. When Max comes to London from Rappallo every one wishes to meet him. He is now listened to as Wilde and Whistler were—no one wants to lose a word of his talk. Max is fortunate in that he attracts men and women of every social and political colour. In spite of his social engagements he preserves his energies for that unhurried reflection from which he has evolved his essays and caricatures. He has the art of persistent evasion of conflict, conflict of any kind, whether mental friction that argument brings or the physical stresses and strains such as walking far, or against wind, or uphill. So in company he prefers to mesmerize those among whom he finds himself into acquiescence with his quietism, the mood that suits his fastidious good manners. He, on his part, is prepared to make sympathetic concession to others; no one is a better listener or a more understanding talker. But he has adopted a manner of speech calculated to prevent anyone breaking in to disturb the course of his own conversation. Indeed, the great talkers I have heard—Whistler, Oscar Wilde, Henry James, George Moore, Bernard Shaw, Yeats, James Stephens, Ralph Hodgson, have been monologists. It is right they should be so. When a fine talker is in the mood he is worth listening to: there is a kind of creative talk which should not be interrupted. Good talkers do, in fact, command attention;

and no one has readier listeners than Max. Yet, apparently so amiable, when his sense of sanity is outraged he can attack fiercely. To reconcile his opinions with his habitual gentleness he takes care to select for his sharp barbs subjects removed from the circle of those present. Yet he is more inclined to appreciate than to find fault. There is something that irritates in habitually detrimental talk. There is a divine discontent; but nothing is more hateful than a weak-mouthed grumbling, a belittling of the absent, a readiness to believe ill of others. Too great a part of social life is given up to this kind of talk.

Two of my friends who particularly delighted in Max's conversation were Frederic Manning and Geoffrey Scott. Manning, who suffered from asthma, had the worn look, as of carved ivory, due to constant ill-health. Owing to this delicacy he lived much in the country, and rarely came up to London. He had the sensitive intelligence one finds in men of fastidious habits, who aim at perfection, but with whom work is leisurely and unhurried. For years he had been occupied with a novel of the time of Louis XIV. The parts he read to me were enchanting; but he dallied and delayed, and though Ezra Pound pressed him to publish the story in *The Dial*, it was never completed. That he managed to produce *Her Privates We* in a comparatively short time was surprising. It was also surprising that T. E. Lawrence spotted the authorship—the book was published anonymously—through his knowledge of Manning's early short stories. (Lawrence wrote to me, 'I was an older reader of Manning than you thought. A review in *The Times Literary Supplement* sent me to try *Scenes and Portraits*—it said, "while we have Mr Manning to write prose for us there is no need to despair of English style." That must have been 1909 or so.) When I sent Manning copies of the letters he wrote to me during the war (some of which are printed in an earlier volume) he wrote: "The letters astonished me rather, as proving how accurately in the book I had recaptured the feeling I had while actually in the line. They are a guarantee

*A poem by
Geoffrey
Scott*

of its veracity.' Manning, of course, was pleased at Lawrence's admiration. 'You and Lawrence', he said, 'are two splendid friends to have, and that is the best reward for any good work, the making of friends.'

When Manning went to Rome, I gave him a letter to Geoffrey Scott. I knew he would like Scott. From Rome he wrote: 'My dear Will, Your friends are a part of you and to tell you how charming they are, is to praise you to your face. I called on Scott and he gave me dinner . . . after dinner we went back to his rooms and he showed me an exquisite poem he had made, called *I locked the sun*; really exquisite, I mean, a thing searched for and by some miracle found. I have not seen a better piece of work lately. The images are perfectly fluid in it and change from shape to shape under his hands. He strikes me as having a very fine, clear mind.'

The poem Manning mentions appeared in *A Box of Paints*, a book of poems illustrated by my brother Albert. Geoffrey Scott had recently published a discerning study of an eighteenth-century bluestocking, Madame de Charrière, known to her friends, and to history, as 'Zélide'. It was a book abounding in all the grace and irony which distinguished his writing. A malicious review appeared in *The New Statesman*, wherein he thought he detected the hand of a friend. We are most of us upset by bad reviews of our work; we rail against critics as we do against doctors, whose undivided attention, none the less, we expect when we need their help. We are complacent enough when praised and flattered, yet no criticism is likely to be remembered, someone wisely said, unless we ourselves draw attention to it. We should know nothing of the foolish comments on Whistler's work but for his *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

We were to lose Geoffrey Scott. He was excited by the discovery of Boswell's papers at Malahide Castle and was asked by his American friend and patron, Colonel Ralph Isham, who purchased them, to edit the text he proposed to



FREDERIC MANNING

issue. Geoffrey was delighted, on account of his interest in Boswell and also because it would ensure him a livelihood for some time to come. He had not long been in America when he developed pneumonia and died within a week; a loss to letters and to his friends, to us especially. We are all in greater or lesser degree vain and selfish, and the loss of one who is a supporter and defender makes a breach in the walls round one's private citadel, for Geoffrey was one of the few who stood by me consistently as an artist, understanding my aims and sharing my attitude towards the arts. Geoffrey Scott, like Manning, was a fastidious writer and, like Manning again, believed in the artistry of life. Both disliked the extreme political tendencies which were making themselves felt.

My left-wing friends hold that to-day artists should take an active part in politics. But there is the deep intuition that the artist's business is to express his sense of values through his art; that he is best employed, indeed finally of most use to the world, in perfecting his form and his conceptions; that the cobbler should stick to his last and make good shoes. When political views are too apparent in prose or verse I think of Max's caricature, the ghost of Stevenson being trotted round by Edmund Gosse, and before Shaw, Galsworthy, Chesterton, Belloc and Wells, all noisy on a platform, saying to Gosse, 'Now that you have introduced me to the social agitators, I should like to meet some of the literary men!' In fact, we care little for the politics of men whose work has survived. We accept their attitude to life, whatever their political sympathies. We are not concerned in reading *Paradise Lost* with the fact that Milton was a Parliament man, nor with the fact that Balzac was a Royalist, when we read *La Peau de Chagrin* or *La Cousine Bette*. Rodin was a Dreyfusard; Degas was a bitter opponent of Dreyfus, but who cares now?

When I first knew James Stephens in Ireland in 1922, he was a Sinn Feiner, but there is no evidence of politics in his writings, though there is evidence enough of his love for

James Stephens talks Ireland. His later books, which deal with Irish mythology, making the old stories live as though he were writing of exciting current events, impress me as being among the wisest and most beautiful of our generation.

James Stephens and his wife now live in a modern villa near Wembley; we always lose our way going there, for the district, which yesterday was open country, is to-day a congeries of new roads, with no definite landmark to guide one. Behind the house is a pleasant patch of square garden, like most suburban gardens; but in its flowers and shrubs—his forsythia like a flaming bush—James can find miracles of beauty—enough for each day, enough for a lifetime. We all want too much, more than we can digest. Our powers of concentration become dissipated. Our vast populations give us not more but fewer men of genius than the small city states produced. Our picture galleries are too large. We get less from their assemblies of canvases than artists heretofore learned from the rare examples of fine paintings they managed to see and memorize.

Stephens is content in his house with the usual furnishing; his few pictures only show some selective interest. Here he entertains, and visitors from London and from Eire sit round, listening to his vivid talk, which ranges over known and unknown spaces. His talk is full of subtlety, not always without a touch of malice. He can invent untiringly. We would spend the afternoon at Wembley and he would often rejoin us later in the evening—later in the true sense of the word, for if supper was at 7.30 he and his wife might arrive towards nine—and without any sign of fatigue, weave theories, tell stories of Dublin life, describe old characters and, now and then, sing some of his favourite Irish songs, building on a square foot of fact an aerial tower arched with a rainbow of dazzling fancy. Once when he was talking of an old man he admired, and some one asked his age, Stephens continued, not noticing the question, which was repeated—was he as old as Shaw? 'No, ten years older than Shaw will ever be!' came the reply. Talking of beauty, 'There are two

things in the world that give beauty to a woman, a squint and a moustache!' and the only flowers he would recognize—the cabbage and the rose. And as he talks he creates a world which, however fantastic, he makes credible.

He would speak of the *Mahabharata*, 'the greatest book ever written. There is a book to thank the Dragon for! All the names, ten thousand, Bhisma, Drona, Yudisthira and the Twins, are of my household. I have been reading eleven volumes and they are all about a great war waged between great men, all related to one another. In the *Mahabharata* woman's principal function was to help her husband to perform his religious duties. The men on both sides worshipped Bhima; and Bhima's adversaries so revered his wisdom that they went to consult him, how could they beat him in battle? and Bhima explained how he could be defeated. So the army advanced, the elephants gravely going forward, trumpeting sadly, but the horses snorted and neighed eagerly, crushing men under their hoofs. Those were the great days when it was man who displayed the power and the glory of beauty. When he doffed his lion's mane, stripped off his scarlet and gold and handed his gorgeous raiment to woman, saying to her, 'Thou be beautiful,' man resigned himself to drabness. Finally, men will hand over everything to women and give themselves up to wisdom—and to drink.

'And isn't Ireland drab? Remember that in her long history she has only lately come into the English-speaking world. The Irish have never produced a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Shakespeare or a Milton. Yeats? Yes, Yeats, after having been a good poet, has become very nearly a great poet. And there was Stephen MacKenna, who has done the greatest translation since Urquhart. Stephen MacKenna once lent us his house in Dublin; attached to the house was a grand Irish terrier. This Irish terrier ate only two kinds of food, bones and motor-cycles. When a motor-cycle came rattling down the street he was ready for it; rushed into the road, seized the front wheel, upset the machine, tore off the rubber tyres, ate them and ate the leather seat as well. One day, having

*A Dublin
policeman*

finished the tyres and the seat of a fine motor-cycle, he attacked the rider and tore off the seat of his pants. Later that day a handsome Dublin policeman came to the door. All Dublin policemen were created by Praxiteles—unless a man can prove himself a genuine work he need not apply for a job in the Dublin force. He walked into the house, his eyes flashing with anger terrible to see; he was like Jove about to release his bolt. My wife stepped forward to meet him, and in that instant she made herself into a cook. Now in a policeman's heaven there will be a beautiful warm kitchen where a friendly cook will bring him choice portions of chicken and ham especially reserved for him. When I came back to the house I found the policeman, a plate of ham and chicken before him, looking at my wife, and I've never seen a man look at the wife of another with such eyes of love, and sitting beside him was MacKenna's Irish terrier, and he was stroking the dog and feeding him from his plate. 'Sure,' he said, 'a fine dog; a fine high-spirited dog as an Irish terrier should be. As for the man on the motor-cycle, he should never have been riding it in this street at all. And sure I am he was riding on the wrong side of the street, and a man like that should not be allowed in charge of a motor-cycle at all, and as likely as not the cycle was stolen anyway.'

Stephens told us how, lately broadcasting, he had come to the end of his typescript and had still some minutes before the microphone, so he improvised this poem:

No pride hath he who sings of escape from love!
All songs of escape from love are songs of despair!
Who so hath got him away hath got nowhere.
He sings below all that he knows as above;
He hath no mind for the gentle, heart for the fair;
No pride hath he who sings of escape from love;
All songs of escape from love are songs of despair!
Who doth not sing as the wild-dove sings to the dove;
The night-wind-sprite to the moon of love is bare!
He hath no pity, passion, praise, or prayer;

No pride hath he who sings of escape from love!
All songs of escape from love are songs of despair;
Who so hath got him away hath got nowhere!¹

*Music and
letters*

Like Yeats, Stephens has his own theories of music. He brushed aside those of Harry Plunket Greene and Herbert Howells, telling them they knew nothing of music and, finally unbending, said he would yet make a musician of Plunket Greene. Max, who was with us, listened with amusement, ignorant, as I, of musical mysteries. 'But you must both compose something notwithstanding,' cried Howells; and we each jotted down some dots in imitation of notes on the lined paper which Howells provided, whereupon he went to the virginals and played our compositions—a unique occasion in our lives!

With Herbert Howells often came Ivor Gurney, a young musician with a worn but beautiful face. He was a poet, too, I found, and while I understood nothing of music I could appreciate his lyrical gift. He had been through the war, and seeing his frail person I wondered how he could have stood the cold and wet of the trenches, let alone the shooting and bombing. I did not know then how near to collapse his sufferings had brought him, that in addition to the rigours and exposure of trench life he had been gassed. There was so much poise in his sensitive perception of beauty, in his response to what was quick and stirring in life. But the fragile shell of his mind was flawed and the pressure of his vital spirit proved too much for it. Twilight settled over his mind, and over the music and the poetry that were in him.

There was another evening when Harry Plunket Greene brought Paul Robeson with him. We were all impressed by his quiet dignity. My daughter-in-law, Elizabeth, who hails from Kentucky, spoke of the songs she heard the negroes sing in her childhood. Robeson, excited, said he dare not sing these in public as they were sung by the negroes as they worked. He told us how his father, a Presbyterian minister,

¹ Since printed as a part of a longer poem, *Theme with Variations*.

*Paintings
at Morley
College*

had suffered in his early years, and he sang to us some of the songs he heard his mother sing, songs so moving they tore at one's heart. All the sufferings of mankind seemed to weigh on one as he sang 'O God save my people'. How could one feel or act meanly in life, how feel otherwise than tenderly for man, humbled, enslaved, a mere chattel, whose soul could, nevertheless, rise in ecstasy above the sordidness and cruelties of the world.

Never, said Plunket Greene, had he heard such singing as Robeson's, that night. What a power has music to stir the soul! It is hearing such songs that I, unmusical, can conceive what more complex music means to others, endowed with musical sense.

We were distressed to hear that Gustav Hölst, whose generosity in giving up precious time to teaching music at Morley College always touched me, in stepping back from an improvised platform while conducting, had gravely injured himself. I thought of him when Mrs Hubback, the Principal of Morley College, after consulting Aitken, and inspired no doubt by Rex Whistler's entertaining paintings at the Tate, approached Hubert Wellington and myself with a view to having the College Refectory and Concert Hall decorated. Cyril Mahoney prepared a noble cartoon for the Concert Hall, while Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious made designs for the Refectory. Morley College had long been associated with the Old Vic Theatre, hence I suggested that subjects from Shakespeare would be appropriate. Bawden and Ravilious accordingly made a series of enchanting designs from Shakespeare's plays, also from some of the earlier miracle-plays. These they carried out beautifully on the distempered walls, first drawing the outlines freely, with so sensitive a touch one almost regretted they would not so remain. Happily, in adding colour they showed no less perfect workmanship.

I was particularly struck in both Bawden's and Ravilious's interpretation of the Shakespearian plays, by the element of phantasy and invention in the costume of their players. Most

performances of Shakespeare's plays are in part spoiled for me by their unimaginative handling, by the inevitable repetition of period dresses. No figure is more tiresome than the stage Elizabethan courtier. I can think of but one stage figure so completely realized as to remain a permanent character, identified with Shakespeare, Falstaff's. Yet the pantomime has given us two figures which have become universal—the Harlequin and the Clown. I think of the inventive fertility of the seventeenth-century production of Corneille's and Racine's classical tragedies, the fantastic mingling of Roman breastplate and buskin with the high perruques and baroque feathers of the court of the Roi Soleil. In the paintings at Morley College there is something of this entertaining spirit. The final result was so attractive that when Sir Joseph Duveen saw the paintings completed, I must not hesitate, he declared, to approach him when I had another such scheme in view. Alas, great men's promises are not always remembered! When, five years later, the headmaster of a secondary school at Brockley wrote to ask whether I could help him to get the walls of the school hall decorated, and Cyril Mahoney generously volunteered, with the help of some of his students, to carry out a series of mural paintings there, I applied to Lord Duveen; he had now bigger irons in the fire.

*A village
hall
decorated*

During 1932 Vaughan Nash, formerly Vice-Chairman of the Rural Industries Bureau, wanted the village hall at Wood Green near Salisbury, where he now lived, to be decorated with paintings. A small sum only was available, in part provided by the Carnegie Trust, most of which would be spent on living and travelling expenses. Nevertheless, two young artists, Edward Payne and Robert Baker, gallantly volunteered. They threw themselves heart and soul into the work; both had imagination and a feeling for country life. Into their designs they introduced the local farmers, their wives and children, their cottages and gardens, horses and cows, and the local landscape. Miss Elizabeth Haldane, through whose interest the Carnegie Trustees were supporting the

*Stanley
Spencer at
Hamp-
stead*

project, had something to say about the designs. 'Dear Sir William, I have seen the sketches—very clever sketches they appeared to me to be—for the Hall at Wood Green. The only thing that struck me was this, and I don't think I need mind telling you. It is all right to have the history of the village—the hay-making as in olden days—the dancing in olden days and the poachers ditto—but ought we not to try to show the people of the land that there is beauty in the train, the modern agricultural implements, tractors, and so on—even the modern poacher with his nets! I wonder what you think, but I am always afraid of our trying to make our little Island into a Museum Piece—perhaps we ought, but I rather think that we have to look onward as well as backward. Of course, it may be said we've got the present and have to be told about the past. But surely we have to be helped to see the beauty in the present? Don't mind if you think this nonsense, but I think our boys and girls at school and at work are such beautiful creatures that they deserve to be perpetuated and presented to us at their best. Is there no chance of you and Lady Rothenstein paying me a visit at Cloan, whither I go very soon? Very sincerely yours, Elizabeth Haldane.'

I liked Miss Haldane's point of view. But there is no lack of present-day interest in these gay paintings. They delighted the villagers, who could not appreciate the artistry, but could understand and enjoy pictures in which every detail was familiar. For among simple people, interest in the arts comes first through the subject matter. I saw in Morocco, and later in India, how crowds of men and women will sit wrapt, listening to a storyteller in the market place. So no doubt the Greeks heard Homer tell of Agamemnon and Priam, Achilles and Odysseus. Was it the style, the form, the sound and rhythm of the verse they appreciated? Surely not, it was the story of fighting, love and adventure that kept them wrapt. 'And with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play and old men from the chimney corner.' So men who have been through

the War can at once follow Stanley Spencer's great paintings at the Memorial Chapel, Burghclere, near Newbury; the difficult idiom does not trouble them. It was in Stanley Spencer's studio in the Vale of Health at Hampstead, high up in the little green-tiled public house, the Vale Hotel, overlooking the pond there, that I saw, with my younger son, Michael, the first designs for these wall paintings; a studio without furniture, save a table and a couple of Windsor chairs, barely large enough for the big canvas of the *Resurrection* which took up one whole side. The table was pushed up against it, on which were tea and breakfast things, with white marmalade jars which seemed to lead up to the white tombstones of the canvas. There was a fire in a small stove, enough to take the chill from the room, scarcely sufficient to warm it. Spencer, with his slight figure, rough dark hair low over his forehead, and something gipsy-like in his small, animated face, might have been taken for a jockey rather than a painter, but for the innocent gaiety of his speech and manner. He was always ready to talk about painting, his own and other people's, and when he spoke of a painting he admired he showed extraordinary observation and an intensely personal insight into the mind of the painter. I remember his enthusiasm over Mantegna's *Martyrdom of Markus*, of which he had a reproduction in his studio. To him the chief drama lay in the businesslike unconcern of the actors and spectators of the martyrdom in contrast to the cavern of beauty formed by the head of the saint bowed close above a tiny world of lovely flowers—a microcosm of the world he saw at this last moment of his life. It was characteristic of Spencer to be painting his *Resurrection*, one of the significant paintings of our time, over a public house, with its taproom and barmaid and loungers and cellars with their barrels of beer and port and spirits below. We left, both my son and I, profoundly impressed by what we had seen.

Not long afterwards Spencer called at our house, and, I being out, he spent the afternoon with my son Michael. My son showed him a number of careful studies of the nude, and

then one drawn with more intention than observation. 'Here's the truth,' Spencer exclaimed. Encouraged by this, Michael brought out a number of his imaginative drawings, conceptions which seemed to lead him into worlds outside his conscious experience. His inner vision is indeed so vivid that, however strange and unfamiliar the scenes, he draws them with a conviction that makes them credible. I had shown some of his decorated initial letters to Harold Monro. Monro was then deep in the bold enterprise of publishing poetry and showed a sure judgment in selecting artists to illustrate his books. Michael was scarcely more than sixteen years old, yet Monro chose him to make one of two alphabets for poems by Eleanor Farjeon; this was the *Country Child's Alphabet*; the *Town Child's Alphabet* Monro gave to David Jones, who also showed marked imagination, and later himself wrote a book of rare quality, dealing with his experiences during the war.

Spencer's fearlessness of approach, his power of throwing himself into his subject, his moral force, combined with a concentrated energy, deeply impressed my son. Talking of the material difficulties an artist has to meet, Spencer said he felt, each time he set to work, as though he were setting out in a boat, with provisions only for a day 'smack into the black'. 'I am still painting the big Resurrection,' he wrote some weeks after our visit, 'it will take me another year to finish and longer possibly. Although the world in this picture is not "without form and void", the ground and the grass and bushes having been painted, still I have not yet come to the exciting point of 'creating' (painting the people. I find I am painting things in this picture in the same order in which God created them, first the Firmament), there is only a tiny bit of it in my picture, but I nevertheless began with it, then all the bare earth bits and the river bits, then the bushes and flowers and grass and trees and creepers, and here I also do walls and buildings, then come animals and human beings together at the end.' I told him how impressed my son and I had been with his designs, and touched on one

thing that seemed incoherent, the contrast between the summary treatment of the figures in relation to the Praeraphaelite finish of the landscape. He at once replied: *A question of figures*

3, *Vale Hotel Studio,*
Hampstead, N.W. 3.

Dear Prof. Rothenstein,

It was very kind of you to write, and your appreciation is the more valuable to me when I see you mention Gilbert.

It certainly is very disconcerting this weakness of mine when I come to painting the figures, or the people as I like to call them; but I believe it is symptomatic of something which if I get over this difficulty will be very good. The thing is that with certain things I can quite clearly recognize the *identity* of some imaginative notion. I can recognize what I want in certain things, objects, *places*, shapes, etc., and I can also see it in people's behaviour and in what they do, but I am lost when I come to what people *look* like.

This is very tragic as the person in the picture is to me the most intense and most dramatic fact of all. I am keenest of all about the people in my pictures and although at present I can only very lamely express any feeling about them at all, yet my thoughts about them are moving along—to me—very exciting channels.

It's very difficult to say in writing just what this feeling is, but certain places, especially in and about Cookham suggest to me certain very wonderful people, and vice versa people, especially great personalities suggest to me the same degree, if not the same kind of feeling as that which I get from some place. And then there seems to be a definite spiritual relationship between particular people and particular places. It does seem sad when I think of the infinite number and variety of feelings a painting of a head can express and the feeble use I make of it. I have an enlargement of a sleeping soldier's head from Piero della Francesca's Resurrection of Christ. Everything is in that head, as you look at it the Roman Empire ceases to be a real thing and

Stanley's Resurrection falls helplessly away; the Resurrection above it is too much for it; 'it o'er crows him quite.'

I would like to come and see you some time if you could have me, which I suppose depends on how well you all are. I hope you are all well.

Yours sincerely,

STANLEY SPENCER.

'When I left the Slade,' he told my son Michael, 'I entered a kind of earthly paradise. Just as all my ideas seem to be unfolding in a fine order along came the war and smashes everything. When I came out the divine sequence had gone. I just opened a shutter in my side and out rushed my pictures anyhow.'

The war had a shattering effect on Stanley, as indeed it had on all the artists and poets who took part in it. He felt an overpowering drive to sublimate the ugliness of his war experiences. He saw all he had been through as things more hideous than imagination could conceive. If he could set down something he might rid himself of the horror. Hence the hold on his mind of the subject of the Resurrection. The Resurrection at Burghclere far outshines the earlier canvas at the Tate. To my mind it stands alone as a religious painting, a great imaginative conception. The design of the tumbled crosses at its base, of the two grand figures of Tommies, the one doing up his puttee, the other polishing his buttons, the powerful pattern of the two horses, leading up to the figure of Christ high up on the canvas, make a whole which has both the directness and the complexity of great art. In the secondary subjects, soldiers carrying their baggage, drinking after a hot march, washing under mosquito nets, Spencer shows a peculiar gift for seeing ordinary things as though they were strange, new and fascinating. The landscape, too, interpreted with a purity of colour, a freshness and attention to detail, would have satisfied Ruskin. How far are these passionate paintings from the studio experiments which appeal to the cognoscenti, and how absurd to

discuss such paintings from the point of view of a pure aesthetic. I hoped that Spencer would be given the chance, by some public body, of dealing thus largely with some other aspect of life. At least, no contemporary painter, dependent on his own creative energy alone, has produced finer work. I had written to Spencer in particular admiration of one of his landscape paintings. 'I did this landscape', he told me, 'when I was staying at Wangford last summer. I think if it is in any way successful it is largely due to the fact that I was happy when I did it. I had been, just before going to Wangford, looking to the big Rubens in the National Gallery and thinking how blissfully happy it was and I came away feeling most inspired and was also delighted that I had actually been able to get real enjoyment from looking at a landscape. There was another landscape Gil¹ had at Marchant's a short time ago called, I think, *Shillingstone Hill, Dorset*. In the qualities which you mention this landscape of Gilbert's is most expressive.' Certainly Stanley's landscapes have a rare beauty, all their own. He is as excited painting a row of suburban villas with their pathetic little fenced-off gardens as when at work on thatched cottages, with their flowering country borders. Flowering shrubs he paints as no one else can, and both he and his brother Gilbert see in carts and horses, agricultural machines and implements the poetry and drama more readily found in village churches and tombstones. Stanley disliked hearing people attribute the whole of his idiom to his own invention; he insists on how much he owes to his brother, to his ebullient nature, his exciting initiative. Gilbert, in his way, is as much a character as Stanley, and an excellent artist too. He is more on the earth than his brother. I remember him saying how throughout the war Stanley seemed able to preserve his passion, to maintain his spiritual interests. He carried Homer's *Iliad* in his knapsack and wrote home about his reading, while he, Gilbert, wrote about woollies and food.

Gilbert's mural paintings at Oxford, done for Balliol

¹ His brother Gilbert.

Architects'
aridness

College, have a Rabelaisian gaiety. Would that more such paintings could be done in our universities, where a cold ecclesiasticism still persists. The day is long past when learning found a home, a protection, in the Cloister alone; but even in the Cloister satire and grotesque found a place. Now the College Halls, whose inner stone work was formerly plastered and bright with colour wash, show their dull stone surface, an ill neighbour to the panelling below, an ill background, too, for portraits.

The chapel for which Stanley Spencer's paintings were made was built by Lionel Pearson. I know of no other, since Herbert Horne's chapel decorated by Frederick Shields, in which the architect has been ready to take second place. Architects claim for architecture that she is the mother art, with Giotto, Masaccio, Michelangelo, Tiepolo, Boucher, Goya, among her progeny. Is she, to-day, like other potential mothers, unwilling, pleading narrow means, to have a family? Perhaps she is now too advanced in years to prove fertile. Architects, where is your Vortex? asked Wyndham Lewis some years ago in a brilliant pamphlet. There is too little adventure among our more fortunate architects; even those who decry the aridness of the younger men rarely incorporate vital ornament into their structures. Arid the work of the younger men certainly is. Their spare buildings are admirably suited to shops and factories; domestic buildings call for warmth, for a sense of intimacy; and in these the newer buildings, with windows of one flat facing another, are wanting. But whatever the contemporary idiom, excellent expression can always be given to it. Equally, the idiom can be feebly or blatantly used. The vulgar spirit that designed bad Victorian stucco buildings is to-day designing bad concrete ones. Let those who live in glass houses not fling stones at stone houses; they may ricochet across.

CHAPTER XII

A HARDY PROJECT

HARDY'S death in 1928 closed an epoch. For long Hardy and Meredith were the accepted novelists, as Swinburne was the accepted poet. Hardy, the last survivor, was a figure apart. Kipling and Shaw were as famous, Kipling disputed by the young, Shaw by the old. To Hardy homage was paid by young and old alike. Though the minds and motives of men are far from simple, there was an apparent simplicity in Hardy which endeared him to all who knew him, and the quiet evening of his life made old age appear a beautiful and desirable thing. It was because George Moore realized that he could have neither the respect with which Hardy was surrounded nor the honours offered him, that he made his silly and ill-natured attacks. Burial in the Abbey is the greatest posthumous tribute England can pay to her illustrious sons and this was felt to be Hardy's due. But Hardy, for whom country churches and churchyards had a strong attraction, left directions that he was to lie beside his first wife in the churchyard of Stinsford. He had always thought to be laid among his own people, and for this he left directions in his will. Finally, it was decided that his heart should be buried in his wife's grave at the little church of Stinsford where his kinsmen lie, while his ashes were to rest in the Abbey. To the Abbey I went, taking a seat beside Henry Nevinson, at the further end of the transept. We found, the Service ended, it was nearby that the ashes were to be interred. The pallbearers were Baldwin, Ramsay MacDonald, Barrie, Shaw, Kipling, A. E. Housman, Gosse and Gals-

*Burial in
the Abbey*

worthy, the Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and the Provost of the Queen's College, Oxford. As they stood round the little opening, draped with violet, they looked so tense, the scene impressed itself vividly on my mind. I thought, what a fine composition these men, standing together, would make, and I made a rough drawing of what was in my mind. I spoke of this to Gosse and showed him my drawing: he was at once interested. So, too, was Mrs Hardy, who was eager to have the scene recorded.

I approached a number of those who had acted as pall-bearers to ask for sittings. Housman alone made a sitting conditional. 'My dear Rothenstein,' he wrote, 'If you get the consent of all the nine others I will not stick out. But you are much too great an artist to catch a likeness. Of course, I do not know what I look like myself, but my acquaintances do not recognize me, so much are my traits ennobled by your pencil. Also I am much exhausted by having sat for two drawings for my two colleagues in the last year, mutually much disapproved of by the two artists. Also the languor of extreme senility makes me more and more averse to locomotion. Also a journalist present in the Abbey says that my person proved as polished as my verse, after which I desire to be for ever invisible. I had heard, and was sorry to hear, that you had not been at all well. I shall hope to see you here in March. I met your younger son at our High Table a week or two ago.' I therefore began making studies of John Galsworthy and Sir Edmund Gosse, while for my drawing of Mr Baldwin I went to No. 10 Downing Street, a house with the plain and unpretentious exterior of eighteenth-century London. We are not good at exterior grandiloquence, it is not a national characteristic—for this reason perhaps we fail in the art of sculpture. A foreigner ignorant of London would not suspect the spacious reception rooms behind the modest brick frontages. Happily, the frontage of No. 10 Downing Street, with its plain door and pleasant iron grill and lamp, remains unchanged. I always liked that doorway, and when Ramsay MacDonald, as Prime Minister, planned

to form a library for the use of the Cabinet, and asked me to design a book plate, I used the entrance to No. 10 as a fitting subject.

*A week-end
with
Kipling*

It was in the Cabinet Room, with its long table covered with green baize, that Mr Baldwin sat to me. During one of the sittings I was hazily aware of a band playing outside. Then I saw that Mr Baldwin had half risen from his chair and it dawned on me that the National Anthem was being played, when I, too, dropping about me pencils, chalk and rulers, half stood up. What a subject for Max! 'Peculiar position of Prime Minister and artist in the Cabinet Room at Downing Street!'

After I had made my drawing of Mr Baldwin, Rudyard Kipling asked me down for a week-end. At the Athenaeum I found Kipling sometimes genial, at other times somewhat stiff; here at home he was easy and companionable. He was so obviously happy at Batemans, with its attractive garden, fishponds and pleasant meadows. Only what would become of it all, he asked, when he was gone? Probably it would be sold to some speculative builder. At which I wondered, thinking him rich enough to ensure its future. Among other treasures, he showed me a number of his father's sketch books and portfolios, full of skilful studies of peasants, craftsmen at their work, beggars and fakirs, temples and street scenes, more interesting, I thought, than the fanciful illustrations made for his son's books. Surely some of these should be reproduced and published; but no, Kipling was unwilling they should be seen. Yet Kipling was devoted to his father and my praise of the drawings pleased him. Still, seeing that he did not hesitate to publish his own works, I could not see any immodesty in reproducing some of his father's. Kipling's was a difficult nature to understand. On subjects apart from politics he was illuminating and open-minded; but touch on anything connected with the Liberal outlook, or with Socialism, and he barked. Bernard Shaw was anathema to him. But his own family, through Burne-Jones and his wife, had Socialist sympathies, and what of

Housman
demurs

William Morris? It was safer to keep away from controversial matters; above all, the words German or Germany must not be mentioned. He could not forget nor forgive the loss of his only son. Happily, there were many other things to talk about. I happened to say how puzzling it was, seeing how scientific were the medieval cathedral builders, how fertile and masterly the painters and sculptors, that the medical men and men of science, with their crude theories and practices, should have lagged so far behind the artists. Now this appears to have puzzled Kipling too. Would I mind if he read me something he had written on the subject? and sitting on the sofa he read through one of his admirable short stories, a story about Roger Bacon and his discovery of the microscope. While browsing among his books, I found Tod's *Rajasthan*, a rare book and highly priced, which I had never been able to afford. After I left, there came a note from Kipling: 'I am sending with this the copy of the "Tod" *Rajasthan* which we were talking about. It is, as you can see, old and patched—it came out of a house that has been neglected for some time, but I hope it may serve you as a working tool.' A generous gift, indeed, which I prize the more for the giver's sake.

The Provost of the Queen's College, Oxford (of which College Hardy had been an Honorary Fellow), also sat to me; then I wrote to Housman, who at once replied:

My dear Rothenstein,

I have some slight reason to think that you will not capture all your ten, and I feel a suspicion that you want to use me as a decoy: 'the churlish recluse, A. E. Housman, has consented, how can you or anyone refuse?' It is just possible that I might be in London one day before the end of the term, and if so I would let you know.

Yours sincerely,

A. E. HOUSMAN.

Meanwhile, I got into touch with Barrie, who made difficulties about sitting. This was unexpected. I informed Hous-



RUDYARD KIPLING

man. 'It is very nice and honest of you to tell me that Barrie has refused to sit,' he wrote, 'because I now shall also refuse, as I warned you.' Shaw, however, made light of the difficulties Barrie was raising; he would see Barrie and get him to waive his objections. Then came a card, 'I dined with Barrie last night. It is all right. He will pose.' Then Barrie wrote:

*Housman
demurs*

Dear Rothenstein,

I am very sorry to be the cause of trouble in the matter. Of course, I know quite well that Shaw is the last person in the world intentionally to misinterpret anything and I am as confident that you are as incapable of misrepresenting the situation to him. But all I said to him was that if Housman came into it I would feel a curmudgeon to stand out, and this is still my position. You spoke of him having told Housman that you could use an old sketch of him, and if he makes no objection to that I'll join in with pleasure. I just want to be sure that I am keeping my word to him.

But all this had become tiresome and complicated, and I dropped the project, to Mrs Hardy's disappointment. Gosse was indignant, and wrote:

My dear Rothenstein,

This will never do! You must not lose heart so suddenly. Remember:

1. This is *your* picture, not B's or H's. Anybody may look at a King, and make an impression of a public scene.

2. If you run counter to the vanity of one man and the weakness of a second, how about the eight (just persons!) who are sympathetic and eager to help? Why should you snub eight by yielding to two?

3. Unless I am mistaken you are already in possession of numerous studies of A. E. H. Why not use them? He will enjoy being able to say, 'Really, you know, I did not stand for this portrait.'

4. Why indulge the vanity of Barrie? If you proposed to paint a monumental picture of Barrie alone, at night, in

*Lawrence
on Hardy*

Poet's Corner, gazing down pensively on Hardy's tomb, and a ray of moonlight falling on that broad white Scottish forehead, Barrie would sit till you were tired of the sight of him.

The whole matter is summed up in that fatal lack of simplicity which is so wretched a lacuna in so many other admirable literary natures. Now G. B. S., with all his lapses, is simple, and this is a great charm.

I shall be very sorry if you allow the gesture of A. E. H. to set you off your task, which is a fine and serious one. You should only think of your picture and never mind what other people say.

Yours very sincerely,

EDMUND GOSSE.

Maybe I should have tried to carry out my design, but the project had become distasteful. Not all Hardy's friends approved of the Abbey burial. I heard from Lawrence from Karachi:

14. 4. 28.

Dear Rothenstein,

Yes, I was a sudden loser when Hardy went. Not that I could be a friend of his: the difference in size and age and performance between us was too overwhelming; but because I'd seen a good deal of him, and he was so by himself, so characteristic a man, that each contact with him was an experience. I went each time, nervously: and came away gladly, saying, 'It's all right.' That's the spirit in which most of us R.A.F. fellows go up into the air. We are always glad to get down again: yet no consideration would keep us (will keep us) from snatching the first chance to fly once more.

I regret Hardy's funeral service. Mrs Shaw sent me a copy. So little of it suited the old man's nature. He would have smiled, tolerantly, at it all: but I grow indignant for him, knowing that these sleek Deans and Canons were acting a lie behind his name. Hardy was too great to be suffered as an enemy of their faith: so he must be redeemed. Each birthday the Dorchester clergyman would insert a paragraph tell-

ing how his choir had carolled to the old man 'his favourite hymn'. He was mild, and let himself be badgered, out of local loyalty. 'Which hymn would you like for to-morrow, Mr Hardy?' 'Number 123' he'd snap back, wearied of all the nonsense: and that would be his favourite of the year, in next day's *Gazette*.

I wish these black-suited apes could once see the light with which they shine.

I wonder if Max is right in saying that women write good letters; good for their men perhaps; but Byron and Keats and Horace Walpole and Chesterfield are not to be matched by any four women's letter-writing I've read. Perhaps he means of unpublished letters: the sort that do not get into print. But even there I think he would be wrong. There are few good letter-writers, I fancy; as few as there are good sonnet-eers; for the same reason: that the form is too worn to be easy, and there are too many who try. It's a less crowded profession, is epic poetry: and that's why there are few bad epics.

I saw Robert Bridges three or four times, while I was at Cranwell and Bovington. A rarely attractive being: always on the tips of his toes, and so distinct from the crowd. Even that hill-top garden isn't rare enough for his setting. But I like his music room. Sassoon was very happily inspired when he gave him that Dolmetsch clavichord. Will you remember me to him, if you write again? I liked him, and he was kind to me.

Hogarth *shone* in Oxford, because he was humane, and knew the length and breadth of human nature, and understood always, without judging. Oxford seems to me a quite ordinary life-less town, now he is gone. He was like a great tree, a main part of the background of my life: and till he fell I hadn't known how much he had served to harbour me.

It is interesting that G. B. S. sits again to you. He is beclouded, like Hardy and Kipling, with works which tend to live more intensely than their creator. I doubt whether you can now see him: you know too much. His best chance

*Heart-
break
House* would be to find some foreign artist who did not know his face; and to be painted by him as 'Sir George Bernard'. So perhaps we would know what he would have been if he had not written. Lately I've been studying *Heartbreak House*: whose first act strikes me as metallic, inhuman, supernatural: the most blazing bit of genius in English literature. I'd have written that first, if I had choice.

Kennington and John: both hag-ridden by a sense that perhaps their strength was greater than they knew. What an uncertain, disappointed, barbarous generation we war-timers have been. They said the best ones were killed. There's far too much talent yet alive.

Two pages of nonsense: for your three sheets. I am in your debt. But deserts do not produce any social grace.

Yours,

T. E. SHAW.

I said earlier that Lawrence was a hero-worshipper, and how generously he could praise! Hardy himself, Mrs Hardy told me, reciprocated Lawrence's admiration to the full. So I think did Shaw, in his own light-hearted way. Lawrence's regard for Hogarth I have already mentioned; Hogarth's death, occurring just after he had been chosen to succeed Herbert Warren at Magdalen College, was lamented by many; by none so deeply as by Lawrence. Robert Bridges also wrote to me of his grief. 'Hogarth's death was a terrible loss. I thought him one of the best men in the country: and I am sure that he was.'

CHAPTER XIII

MEMORIES OF THE PINES

GOSSE did not long survive Hardy. His death, too, closed *Charteris' portraiture* an epoch. With him went rich memories of Swinburne, of Stevenson, Hardy and Henry James, of others with whom he had been intimate. Of these he was a mine of gossip and information, of anecdotes, of their habits and peculiarities, told always with a zest, a sparkling malice, a breathless enjoyment in beautifully rounded and rhythmical language. I see his face, bright-eyed behind his glasses, his white hair parted in the middle, his pale moustache, while he sat with his hands folded tight across his chest at the Savile Club, surrounded by his cronies after luncheon. How well Evan Charteris draws his portrait in the biography he wrote of his friend, a full-length to set beside that which he made of John Sargent. Charteris knew his endearing qualities and his endearing foibles, relished his peculiar personal idiom to the full, during their long friendship. I had some correspondence with him about Gosse:

My dear Rothenstein,

Thank you for your very exalting letter. I set all the store in the world by your praise and like it all the more for thinking that you have allowed goodwill to colour it. I think you have a wholly just and delightful appreciation of Gosse—exactly as one ought to remember him—without as one occasionally did when he was alive, getting side-tracked and even derailed by his foibles and fancies. One never learns—one never applies the postmortem standard interviews, and yet I

*The Pines
again*

don't feel I *could* have got more out of my friendship for him and with him, during thirty unclouded years, in the course of which I don't think we had one single 'upset'. I agree—the type of the true man of letters was peculiar to that period—or rather is not to be found to-day—they started under the shadow or illumination of great names, under the discipline of awe, and without the obligation to take up demolition as a business, and iconoclasm as a pastime. I would like to see Lafourcade's Swinburne. May I send for it or is there a chance of your bringing it to the Tate on Monday? If you see Max, I wish you would remind him that at the National Portrait Gallery we are pale with waiting for his life of Irving.

I sent Lafourcade's *Early Life of Swinburne* to Charteris, a remarkable study, to my mind, of the poet. Gosse, too, thought highly of it. Lafourcade also quotes long passages from *Lesbia Brandon*, the early unpublished novel of which Thomas Wise possessed the manuscript, and refers to the strong influence on Swinburne of the writings of the Marquis de Sade. 'What an extraordinary favour the Marquis de Sade is enjoying now!' wrote Lafourcade during 1930. 'To think that in Victorian England his name was unmentionable, and now he is hailed as "one of the greatest of writers" and "a serious thinker". Swinburne who styled him an "illustrious benefactor of humanity" (but with his tongue in his cheek) would be surprised at this turn of the wheel of fame—I shall always remember how Gosse nearly had a fit when I first mentioned to him the name of de Sade in connection with Swinburne.'

And how shocked Watts-Dunton would have been at Lafourcade's detailed book, though Lafourcade writes sympathetically of Swinburne's great friend. Gosse was a little envious of Lafourcade, who was able to use material which Gosse's relations with Swinburne's family did not allow him to mention. Gosse had a strong bias against Watts-Dunton, which affected his later relations with Swinburne. I, too, had



A. P. Houghton 1927

SIR EDMUND GOSSE

nursed a grievance against Watts-Dunton, and wrote unkindly of him in a previous volume. This showed ingratitude; for it was Watts's friendship for my wife and myself which brought me to Swinburne. When, in later years, I returned to The Pines to visit Mrs Watts-Dunton, there came vivid memories of the two great friends, of Watts-Dunton, with his small rotund figure, his apple-red cheeks, his rambling talk about poetry, his enthusiasm for literature, his old-fashioned ways, and of Swinburne's slight nervous figure, his greenish eyes, noble brow and golden beard, in his room above. Most of the old furniture, the Rossetti and Madox Brown pictures, two paintings by my father-in-law, Walter John Knewstub, one of them a portrait of my wife as a girl, still hung at 'The Pines'.

Mrs Watts-Dunton, of whose beauty her elderly husband was so proud, was the model for Rhona in *Aylwyn*, and she always told us that Theodore regarded my wife as one of 'the Stunners'. Unlike Swinburne, Watts-Dunton admired beautiful women.

In our garden at Oakridge there is now a row of lilac bushes, all grown from the root of the small lilac bush from which my wife cut the flowers and leaves to lay on Swinburne's death-bed.

Max has immortalized the two poets at 'The Pines'. To him, as to others of his generation too, Swinburne's was a magic name. Rereading *Atalanta* of late years, I know that we were not wrong in our estimate of Swinburne's genius.

Lafourcade writes of Watts-Dunton's unfailing habit of proclaiming Swinburne's latest work, whatever its value, one of the best he had ever composed. On the other hand it was generally agreed that *The Testament of Beauty*, which appeared during 1929, was Bridges' finest achievement. Herein he has done that which de la Mare said all men should do upon reaching ripe years—set down his reflections and conclusions on life. He had already sent me some fragments of the poem; the work itself moved me deeply; it seemed to me truly a testament of beauty. That he was cheered by the

A testament of beauty warm reception of this work of his old age, the letter I had from him shows.

Chilswell.

Oct. 27th.

My dear Rothenstein,

I wish that I deserved 1/1000th part of what you so kindly wrote me. I have received a good many congratulatory letters which shame my conscience, and one from the Bh of Oxford that competes with yours! Still I confess that the sincere esteem of one's friends is a very warm and comfortable thing. Also that it is well to be reminded how much one really values and depends on it.

I hope Squire will be printing a longish poem of mine in his November *Mercury*. You must try to read it.

Yours gratefully,

ROBERT BRIDGES.

The poem proved indeed to be Bridges' last testament, for the year following he died, at the ripe age of eighty-six.

CHAPTER XIV

HELEN WADDELL AND HÉLOÏSE

ODDLY enough, I thought, considering his close ties with India, Kipling knew little about Tagore. Perhaps he chose to know little; he could scarcely approve of Tagore's attitude towards national independence and imperialism. Tagore continued to pour out poems, translations of which he sent me from time to time; also poems he wrote in English. Yeats and Sturge Moore were critical of these. A poet must write in his own language. The exact meaning of words in an alien tongue eludes him. He inclines to use words and phrases which have lost their quality through over use. I remember Legros telling me that Baudelaire, to whom Swinburne sent a number of poems he had written in French, said a similar thing—no foreigner could write French to satisfy a French ear.

The language for poets

Tagore realized the anomalous position he held as a poet, when his poems could not be read in the original Bengali. He had been somewhat rash in allowing translations to be published, with none of the fire, of the delicate rhythm, which we are told marks him as the true poet in his own language. Yeats wrote once when I sent him some verses by an Indian poet:

'I send back to you the Indian's poems. I have no doubt that your Indian is, as you say, charming and sensitive, but he is writing in a language in which he does not think. Tell him to go back to India and start a boycott of the English language. When the English insisted on all the higher educa-

*Tagore
explains*

tion of the Indians being carried on in English they did her greatest wrong to India, making a stately people clownish, putting indignity into their very souls. Probably your poet has talent, may even make a name for himself, if he will write in the language he has learned in childhood. Only two Indians have ever written well in English, Arabindo Ghose, perhaps a dozen times in his verse, and Toru Dutt in her exquisite letters (her poetry has no merit). Of course, I am talking of creative work alone.'

Tagore, in one of his letters, touched on the same subject:

'Poets are proverbially vain and I am no exception. Therefore if I cherish even an exaggerated notion of the value of my own poems, which are in Bengali, I am sure you will half humorously tolerate it. But I am no such fool as to claim an exorbitant price for my English which is a borrowed acquisition coming late in my life. I am sure you remember with what reluctant hesitation I gave up to your hand my manuscript of *Gitanjali*, feeling sure that my English was of that amorphous kind for whose syntax a school-boy could be reprimanded. The next day you came rushing to me with assurances which I dared not take seriously and to prove to me the competence of your literary judgment you made three copies of those translations and sent them to Stopford Brooke, Bradley and Yeats. The letter which Bradley sent to you in answer left no room for me to feel diffident about the merit of those poems and Stopford Brooke's opinion also was a corroboration. These were enthusiastic as far as I remember. But even then I had no doubt that it was not the language but the earnest feeling expressed in a simple manner which touched their hearts. That was amply enough for a foreigner and the unstinted praise offered to me by those renowned critics was a great deal more than I could ever expect. Then came those delightful days when I worked with Yeats and I am sure the magic of his pen helped my English to attain some quality of permanence. It was not at

all necessary for my own reputation that I should find my place in the history of your literature. It was an accident for which you were also responsible and possibly most of all Yeats. But yet sometimes I feel almost ashamed that I, whose undoubted claim has been recognised by my countrymen to a sovereignty in our own world of letters, should not have waited till it was discovered by the outside world in its own true majesty and environment, that I should ever go out of my way to court the attention of others having their own language for their enjoyment and use. At least it is never the function of a poet to personally help in the transportation of his poems to an alien form and atmosphere, and be responsible for any unseemly risk that may happen to them. However, you must own that you alone were to blame for this and not myself. To the end of my days I should have felt happy and contented to think that the translations I did were merely for private recreation and never for public display if you did not bring them before your readers. Please thank Yeats once again on my behalf for the help which he rendered to my poems in their perilous adventure of a foreign reincarnation and assure him that I at least never underrate the value of his literary comradeship. Latterly I have written and published both prose and poetry in English, mostly translations, unaided by any friendly help, but this again I have done in order to express my ideas, not for gaining any reputation for my mastery in the use of a language which can never be mine.'

Another eminent Indian, Brajendranath Seal, whom I had met when he was on a visit to England, a delightful character, a philosopher and a great scholar, was engaged on a long epic poem. He sent quantities of typescript to me, wanting my criticism, which I was unfitted to give. I suggested he should send his poem to some one likely to be in sympathy with his aim. He would value, he replied, Chesterton's opinion, and to him I sent the script. After some delay came the following:

*A letter
from
Chesterton*

*Overroads,
Aylesbury End,
Beaconsfield.*

Dear Mr Rothenstein,

If you think I have any real rag of excuse for my conduct in keeping this MS. so long you are mistaken. I am wrong, and I only am wrong, and I am utterly wrong—as the priest has to say when he says Mass. Honestly, I was hideously hurried when the thing arrived, and for long after; but that was no reason for not sending the thing back at once, if I could not deal with it. But though I have nothing whatever in the way of Apologia, I do want to offer a very real apology.

The only genuine apology I can imagine is a confession. My motives in delaying the matter till the end of my rush of work, were bad motives. The first was a snobbish desire to do something for a great modern artist whom I happen to admire. The second was something even more modern and wicked than an admiration for artists; it was doubt. I kept your Indian friend's work before me because I found it so hard to decide what to say about it. Busy as I was, and idle as I wished to be, I should not have kept it so long if I had not thought (as the housekeepers say) that it would keep. It will keep. There are very fine things in your Indian friend's stuff. 'In ocean's ageless laughter at the end' . . . 'a sweet undying pathos; man's coming destiny' . . . 'the orbs unspin themselves away' . . . 'in the beginning is the Will' (a very orthodox sentiment) . . . 'that in a shoreless ocean break no more'. All that is really good; and, if it was not a man's original language, astoundingly good.

I do not know whether, after my bestial negligence, I retain any right to advise. But if I did, I should advise your friend not to publish the thing in its present form. The vulgar critics (of whom I have been one) would stifle all the matters in which he was right in those in which he was wrong, e.g., they might present him as a vulgar plagiarist; because he does lift whole familiar phrases in English verse bodily . . . 'pass like night from land to land' . . . 'furies

slinging flame' . . . 'working out the beast', etc. I don't misunderstand this, but *they* would. But also the very form of the thing is risky. It is broadly true that a short poem must be a song or an epigram. But a long poem must be a story. That is all that an epic ever really meant. Egotism is the most offensive, but sometimes the most practical form of advice. I began life with a volume of short poems, which certainly were not songs, but might be called epigrams—bad ones. But they all expressed the same moral philosophy. Now I think people realised it was the same philosophy very largely because it was in short and different poems; one called a Fish and another a Lamp-post and another a Donkey. I should say your friend could really sell his ideas (for he has many) if he would sell them separately. Anyhow, I do not here profess to be the enlightening Lamp-post; but only the laborious Donkey.

Yours in genuine misery,

G. K. CHESTERTON.

No wonder Chesterton was so much loved! He had, like de la Mare, a natural goodness which every one recognized. It is odd that goodness should be a target at which flippant people throw their little darts. Yet no quality is more respected, more liked. In Chesterton it shone. Of many things and many people he was genially intolerant—Jews, for example, and teetotallers, and stockbrokers; but he preserved his entire respect for publicans!

Belloc shared his likes and dislikes; but Belloc, equally honest, had a fiercer strain in his nature. He had always stood apart from the tendencies and beliefs of most of his literary colleagues, insisting that the conception of European unity was shattered by the Lutheran heresy. It is as well that an unpopular view should be stated as a corrective to one that is generally accepted, and whatever view Belloc takes he expresses with a rousing emphasis; indeed, that to which he sets his hand, history, poetry, story-writing and satire, he carries through with a masterful zest. His *Voyage in the Nona* shows him to be a capable man of action also.

Sunset over
Moore

As Sturge Moore has championed Ricketts and Shannon, so has Maurice Baring stood by the side of Chesterton and Belloc. Yet how different Baring's attitude to life! For while Belloc and Chesterton are, in a way, social revolutionaries—not Socialists—Maurice Baring accepts the society into which he was born. He is at home in Mayfair and the country house. He knows that the privileged classes are far from being conventional or narrow in their views; indeed, he represents a consistent quality of the aristocrat—extreme independence, bordering on eccentricity. Habitually gentle and humorous he has high spirits which may, in a moment, boil over; at such moments anything to hand might be hurled out of the nearest window. But in his writing there is no eccentricity. I delight in his books, for he gives to his characters, to his women especially, the physical and spiritual grace which painters once gave to their women's portraits. One must go to writers for the portrayal of finely bred men and women. I never envisage Baring's ladies with blood-red finger nails or sealing-wax lips. I envy Maurice Baring, Leo Myers, Vita Sackville-West, Viola Meynell, Elizabeth Bowen, their portraits of women. Love their women know, and passion, and the suffering which passion entails, but through all they keep their fine poise; which, on canvas, so few painters can give them.

Even George Moore, later in life, aimed at a finer quality in his characters and left his sordid ones for good. He was now occupied with the story of Héloïse. 'My dear Rothenstein,' he wrote from Ebury Street, 'You will forgive me I hope. My life was never quite so impossible as at the present. I go to bed thinking of Héloïse and Abélard, of the great forest which they have just come through, of their arrival at Orleans which I am now trying *to see* as it was in 12 century (sic), the blue river in a grey green landscape covered with sails. The river is now sailless. The sand has silted. I must *see* their journey to Nantes, at least in outline—the different towns—Beaugency, Meung, Blois, Tours. I should like to pay you a visit and can go to you *after* dinner any evening,

arriving shall we say at half-past eight. But I cannot sit to you. Were Rembrandt to rise from his grave I *think* I should refuse. Always sincerely yours, George Moore.' *Helen's
Héloïse*

The last time I saw Moore was at the Chelsea Arts Club, on the occasion of a dinner to Steer. His face was then pink and smooth as a child's: I wondered whether this was caused by the illness from which he was then suffering. The dinner was marred by some over-excited members of the club. Drink can be so made attractive in literature as to tempt one to indulgence; in actual life it is less alluring. Yet the only excuse for sobriety is that a man shall be as witty, as companionable, sober, as another may be in his cups.

Another person was to write, too, of Abélard and Héloïse, Helen Waddell, and how lovely a character she gave to Héloïse! 'I wonder if any author ever got such a letter,' she wrote. 'The people one is grateful to aren't the people who praise you, even with the right adjectives, but the ones who feel about a book as you felt when you were reading it. And chapters in it, I said to myself, would hold one spring for me for ever, a kind of distillation, so that if I were old and kind I might still remember the ecstasy it was written with. And though that is not now true of me, for it is terrible and disappointing that one's work goes out of this life when it is finished, I don't care. Partly because I am now working on a new book—the sequel—which is to be *Héloïse*: and partly because one—perhaps two—people have seen that spring and I recapture it through them. But you are the only person who felt it as I did. Yours H. W.' But could she create a more enchanting character than her own? Every one who knows Helen loves her. With the austerity of the North, she has the warm heart, the grace and imagination of the Southern Irish. I was amused when we asked A. E. during one of his visits to London, to luncheon—Helen Waddell was to be with us, we told him. 'Thanks,' he replied, 'I could lunch with you any day—I prefer you undiluted. Not that I do not like dear Helen Waddell, but every person in London who asks me to lunch or dinner or tea offers dear Helen as an at-

*Duplica-
tion of
Helen* traction. I am coming rapidly to believe that there are a number of Helens made in her image and who have learned an evening's conversation from listening to Helen, and when a hostess wants to make her party specially attractive she goes to the bureau and the bureau says, "Will I send you a Helen Waddell?" That is the most popular thing in London. Poets and artists come to meet her as the magnet draws the filings. I am going to tax Helen with her substitutes, but I suppose she has to get time to live and write. I am not trying to get out of meeting Helen, but I fear she may be sick of meeting me. I lunch with her on Thursday, I think. At least, she has promised to be at Lady Londonderry's. I met her at G. B. Shaw's, Lady Ottoline Morrell's and at other places where she (or a substitute Helen) was the attraction. And of course I like to meet her.' When I taxed Helen with her popularity, I heard from her:

'But, my very dear William, I have been living more like a Hermit than like a human being. It's all A. E.'s wickedness—he confessed at the Londonderrys' lunch to-day with twinkling eyes and ears. He has counted up all the times he has met me since he came to London sometime in July, and now conveys the impression that I, the most dormouse of mortals, am an hardened diner-out, by compressing all these lunch, tea and dinner parties into about three weeks. Seriously, my two dears, I have been sleeping so badly and so tormented with lectures I haven't had time to prepare, that I have been refusing everything I possibly could. I didn't go to the Londonderrys' party on the 20th and so when they asked me to-day I felt I must be polite, and it was fun, it always is. That's the worst of it. I shall feel happier when this lecture is over—on the 6th. I send you a card, but must warn you that you may be asked to chairman it for a Red Cross lecture on Feb. 7th so don't come twice. After that, I am due to go to a University dinner in Dublin, but I am trying to do a wriggle out of the nearer date, so as to save me coming to Ireland twice in ten days. My love and duty to the

Ranee: but I so badly want a long holiday in County Down with Denise. She was over here, seeing off her son to Rhodesia, only for a very few days, but when she comes again I so want you both to come and meet her.'

I wondered, as both Helen Waddell and George Moore wrote on Héloïse, whether either knew of the other's work. I had an idea that George Moore might have known that Helen had the subject in mind, after his own book appeared; also that Helen would never look into Moore's work lest her own vision of the characters might be affected. Ellis Roberts said it was impossible that Moore should have known anything of Helen's project. I wrote to her to enquire . . .

'Now about George Moore's book and my own. *You* are one half right, and Ellis (is he better?) is one half right. For I doubt if George Moore ever knew that I was writing a book on Abélard, and my own was finally published only, I think, a few months before his death. I didn't know him personally, so that we could not even have talked about it. And his own was written and I think published while I was still busy with *The Wandering Scholars*.

'It was I who feared to read his—and indeed to this day have avoided it, because I have still to do the last years and must go my own way. Ever since I was an undergraduate my mind was working on Abélard; not so much the lover, oddly enough, but the heretic, truth's martyr, rather than Love's Martyr. I'd thought rather of a biography than of a novel. There in Paris, about May or June of 1924, I was ill with a septic throat, nursed by nuns in the Parvis, and for nights could get no sleep: and—surely I told you this—one night, about the fourth night of sleeplessness, I all at once was Héloïse, Héloïse as I had never thought of her, not the young Héloïse, or the tortured woman of the letters in young middle-age, but Héloïse grown old, a quiet abbess, with Abélard twenty years dead. It seemed to me that when any of the Sisters came in through the night to offer me hot milk and be sorry that I couldn't sleep, I was myself again; the moment they went out, I was Héloïse, without any transi-

tion. I don't think it was delirium, for I remembered everything, once the morning came and all the waking noises were about me (in the Parvis you have a room all to yourself). I knew then that the biography must be a novel, for in a biography one must abide by the existing ending and be constantly saying. "It is perhaps permissible to assume that . . ." But in a novel I was free. In the old phrase of theology, I had "apprehended the person", and I wrote that book, very much as I translate a poem, in a kind of demon possession—only I'd like to spell it "daemon"—And yet, apart from brooding and seeing things in my head, only two or three chapters got down on paper at the first: and sometimes there were years between.

'It was at some very early stage that in some moment of depression—I suppose people had been talking about the impossibility of any one handling the subject once Moore had done it—I got out Héloïse and Abélard one morning at the British Museum, and looked at the first few chapters. That set me free, I knew it was miraculous prose, and I knew I must not go on, for it has a kind of wizard compulsion: but I knew that we were writing *about different people*. And, hang it all, *I had been there*. I'm not pretending that I'm psychic, for I'm not. But I think A. E. was right when he said that if one had brooded long enough and deeply enough, one can sink into what he called "the Stream of the Ever Living", and know what men before us had known.

'But I could not go on reading, for I wanted to go my own way across country, and it is a strange thing how even on a mountain-side you instinctively follow the faintest track in the heather. And I did not want to go down the ways of another man's mind, or I might lose my own.

'It was probably the George Moore side of it that Ellis challenged, for I *must* have told him my own side of it. On the other hand, I've heard so much about G. M.'s version and discussed his handling of the story—above all that Héloïse should be ignorant for so many years of the catas-

trophe—that Ellis may have forgotten that it was hearsay rather than first-hand knowledge.

*Emergence
of Abélard*

‘A. E. wrote me two extraordinary letters¹ about the book

¹ One of the letters from A. E. to which Helen refers is so characteristic of A. E.’s rare nature that with her approval it is given here:

17 Rathgar Avenue,
Dublin

My dear Helen Waddell,

I have been reading all day your Peter Abelard, I began it with some terror for when I read the letters some thirty-five or forty years ago I was more moved by that love story than by any other, for I had in myself then an anguish of struggle between so rich and glowing a love and my longing for a spiritual life, and I read in the story of Heloise and Abelard much of my own life: and when I say I began it with some terror I mean I dreaded to have a resurrection of that old battle in my heart. But I read on because I am old and knew I could not feel as I once did. I think your tale is most moving and beautifully imagined and told, and with many profundities and illuminations and intensities, as when Heloise tells Abelard:

‘What we must not do is to pretend it is not a sin, and sprinkle it with holy water, and cover it up with holy words until it rots us.’

To speak like this is to speak out of a passionate wisdom which foresees the pit into which it is falling. We do foresee like that even when we go on as Heloise goes on in your tale to her destiny of love and agony.

We do go on to our martyrdoms knowing all the while in the spiritual part of us that we are marching to our crucifixion and by our own will, and there is another part of us which clutches at gallant straws as Heloise does when on the same page she would have her lover belong to ‘the community of noble souls’ and for herself she says her passion has burnt up Heaven and earth into a glory and ‘I know they are wrong St. Paul and St. James or whoever it was, and yet I know, I feel in my heart they are right.’ And in that contradiction of faith you are speaking out of profundities for we have moments when our dual nature holds up torches to light Heaven and our sins and imagines that in some ineffable way it may be that they will be finally reconciled, and our hope is for a wisdom which will

Teach how the crucifix can be
Carven from the laurel tree

*Emergence
of Abélard*

And Sappho lay her burning brows
On white Cecilia's lap of snows.

I have not found you speaking anything through your characters which is not true to our triune nature in which body, soul and spirit cry each their own cry, and go their own way, and have no pity for each other. I never knew which part of me once wrote

And life within the spirit crucified
The eyes eternal pits thee, thou art
Fated with deathless powers at war to be
Not less the martyr of the world than He
Whose thorn-crowned brows usurp the dew of tears
We would pay to thee, ever ruddy life.

You have fashioned your tale with the true patience of an artist 'Loading every rift with ore'. I feel ashamed of myself who have been trying for six months to write a book, and got weary of it and sent it a couple of months ago to my publishers, when if I had patience and waited for a couple of months, I would have got over my sickness at my own thoughts and might have found others which would have made my book to glow. Now I am looking sadly at my proofs and feel rebuked by your care in leaving no page without its just feeling. I will send my book to you when it appears. You will find it thin. I have not your scholarship to make all rich and must write out of my own fantasy, and the moon of fantasy is setting with me, worse luck. Anyhow, I will give you a copy of 'The Avatars' when Macmillans give it to me. I am not wise to write about human loves and hates, and am trying to tell of another love.

It was most kind of you to send me your beautiful story. I can see how you have lived into it as if you were a contemporary, as indeed you may have been in some deep of your being. There is an Everliving in which past, present and future are one and when we brood on the past it may be our own intensity brings us to live in that we brooded upon. It's not only in vision we revisit the past: our hearts may sink into it and know what others have known. This is a kind of faith with me. I have not written as I should about your book but have let my thought run anyway about it. But you will forgive me.

Yours most sincerely,

A. E.

when it first came out. I'm writing to Mollie to ask her

to find them for me if she can, for I think you would like them.

'My dear love to Alice, and little Rachel, and your blessed self. Helen.'

*Friend-
ships at
Ebury
Street*

That Helen was Héloïse I could understand; so should an author, while concentrating on a character, become the character, whether it be a good or an evil one. But Helen's own nature allowed her to give an exquisite quality to her Héloïse. I leave it to others to compare the two versions of the tragic story. I am content with Helen Waddell's.

The change in my relations with Tonks prevented my seeing so much of Moore and Steer as hitherto, for Tonks, in his friendships, was extremely possessive. I hinted to Moore that I was less welcomed to Ebury Street than formerly. 'My dear Rothenstein,' he wrote, 'You are mistaken when you write that I have of late years forgotten my old friends. I forget nothing, but my time for work is growing shorter and my correspondence longer. Letters come in from every side and every letter means half an hour or an hour away from my work. It is kind of you to tell me that my late writings have interested you, and I should like to show you the copper-plate engravings that Stephen Gooden has done for *The Brook Kerith*. Hoping to have time to do this one of these days, when I have overcome some difficulties that have arisen in *Aphrodite in Aulis*.'

Moore, like Flaubert, had turned away from contemporary subjects, realizing that the essential drama of life, the range of emotions affecting the heart of man and of woman, are unchanging. Yet, I remember reading somewhere of the delirious effect Aeschylus' play *The Persians* had upon an audience which had lived through the actual events, had witnessed the destruction of Xerxes' fleet and the retreat of his formidable armies.

When Gordon Bottomley sent me a volume of his plays, most of which dealt with subjects from early British stories, I wrote to him wondering whether he would some day write

Gordon
Bottomley
explains

a play on some more contemporary event. In his reply he gave a clear and convincing explanation of his attitude to the subject-matter of drama; I recently came upon his letter:

*The Sheiling,
Silverdale,
Near Carnforth.
Oct. 15th, 1920.*

My dear Rothenstein,

Your inspiring letter gave me great pleasure the other day, and made me wish that I reminded you oftener with my own pen of me on my hill-top.

Your letter, with all it says of the lack of counsel my generation had to suffer from in its beginnings and of the paramount necessity that contemporary life is to be interpreted (and in a great language), stepped so unerringly into the centre of my own tentatives and perplexities and dilemmas that I wanted to take the first train to Campden Hill and talk it out with you. But alas I can never take the train I want to or when I want to; so, at the risk of boring you, I am taking your suggestion that I should write oftener with a literal promptitude that is unprecedented in me.

To ally poetry, and especially poetic drama, with contemporary life is my only desire; and yet I am always in doubt and bafflement about it. This aim should be equally possible to all the arts: if I were a novelist I should not want to reconstruct the crusades or the court of Charles II—I should be absorbed in the life of my own country since 1850, with all its implications for us: if I were a painter the delight of my eyes would send me passionately in the wake of the creators of *Work* and *The Doll's House*: then why do I seem to be continually, consistently inhibited from following this path in poetry also? Is the problem on all fours for poetry: is there any fundamental reason why the great poets of the past found their subjects either in a time or a place remote from their everyday surroundings? Does poetry need a remote condition to set free its specific virtues of imagery and recollection?

*Gordon
Bottomley
explains*

My friend Wilfrid Gibson has solved the problem to his own satisfaction by insisting that the poet must find his subjects in contemporary life; but while I admire his results I cannot be content with his logic or his inhibitions. For in fact he does not envisage contemporary life in its completeness and significance, but only that of the poorer classes, the classes most immediately in contact with reality; and the only deduction I can make for my own guidance from that and his success is that poetry can treat best of natural life and can too easily lose its way and its atmosphere in treating of sophisticated, artificial life.

This commends itself to me, for I do not write of the past as the past; the Vikings, the Normans, the Jacquerie are poetic to me, but the courts of Charles II, or George II, leave me becalmed, disenchanted, fettered.

Is this, then, perhaps enough?

Again, how shall I write of contemporary life? I was chopped out of it at 18, and it is the thing of which I know least. What I see of life in this remote place can be very little different from what men and women saw in Armside Tower, over the hill, in 1320—except that they saw a more complete organism of life. If I am to write of present-day life as it exists about me, I have practically imposed on me a peasant drama of the Synge-Abbey Theatre type; and this my mind rejects vehemently—I do not wish to yield to the limits of peasant experience, it is too dangerous for one in my situation.

Must I, then, accept a fundamental disqualification and deny my ardour to create and the intensity with which I experience?

Is it not legitimate to go back to those times in the past when the country about me was containing a complete organisation of life unmaimed by the elephantiasis of the modern town-growth? I put aside my Graeco-Syrian experiment, I have come North for good: I cannot find any hope in rehandling Southern mythologies, whether Greek or Indian: I want the life of my own country, but in my singular

Gordon
Bottomley
explains

circumstances I find most joy in handling subjects that will allow me to reconstitute a complete, full life, with its centre here and not elsewhere, in the region of which I know most.

Then I come back to your fundamental, ineluctable requirement of finding inspiration in the life about us: but must it be of as well as *in* the life about us? Poetry is such an unreal form of speech by its metric nature: can it be used with a sense of reality in situations resembling those of daily life? Why does opera (except in comedy) never handle contemporary life convincingly: is it because we are too immediately conscious that we do not usually speak to our lovers and parents in recitative with a fixed tonality and time-signature?

Does, then, poetic drama need to create a symbol of life rather than a representation of life?

I feel sometimes that perhaps the solution for a poet is to be found in the different aspects the great themes present to the different ages: different heroes may embody the same principle, but, beyond that a supreme story of a time long gone presents quite another aspect to our consciousness and culture from what it did to those who first knew it, and can yield new delight and illumination from its rehandling in an unexpected light. In that sense would it not be right to claim that John's *X=O*¹ or Morris' *Dream of John Ball*, or Maeterlinck's *Aglavaine and Selysette* find their inspiration in the life about us as truly as *Abraham Lincoln* or Claudel's *L'Echange* or Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse* and *St Antoine*? I feel the Greeks must have thought so when they experienced the *Elektra* of Euripides after knowing only those of Aeschylus and Sophocles.

I feel too that there is something real to be done yet in telling the story of the past of Britain; and especially for us of the North, where the past has too often been simply assumed to be identical with the better-known, more documented past of the South. And if the English, the local, theatre is to come to life again, there should be a vital need,

¹ John Drinkwater's play.

as well as a fine chance, of filling in the gaps of history and legend left by the Elizabethans—beside the rehandling of such themes as the Jeanne d'Arc one which only now could receive proper treatment: for to tell a nation of its past and its significance seems to me one of the great functions of a theatre.

*Gordon
Bottomley
explains*

I am rather aghast, now I have done it, at the length and volubility with which I have poured out the seesaw of my mind all over you: I meant to do it in half a page when I began. Most of all, I hope you won't think I intend it as an apology: we are all nowadays

Midway between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

and I have set all this down to receive your comment: if you let the wind out of it I shall be so much nearer to the truth I seek.

Speaking of letting the wind out reminds me of the unbounded and recurrent joy which I had lately from your brother's performance of the operation upon a parasitic pretender in the new number of *Theatre-Craft*. It is a masterly, delicate performance,¹ compounded of aplomb and absolute certainty of touch, with one of those two-edged rapiers that go through a man and come out at the back without his knowing it.

The other week I spent a day with L. Haward at the Manchester Gallery. He took us into the dishevelled part of the gallery where he was hanging a new exhibition; and the first thing I saw was a portrait of John which I was sure must be by you. It is a veritable presence, the actual, vivid, living John.

We were then on our way to Buxton. As we came home again we made an opportunity to see the Madox Brown frescoes in the Manchester Town Hall. How noble and vital and essential they are; it filled me with delight to see so much new work all at once by that beloved and revered painter;

¹ My brother Albert Rutherston.

Max on but I have been unhappy ever since because I cannot forget
Mac- their condition. They were boarded over during the war;
Donald and whether for that or some other reason patches of paint
the size of thumb-nails have been knocked off four or five of
them in the lower parts. In particular the head in the left-hand
corner of the Roman one has a whole row of these patches
so knocked off and showing the white ground. I wish your
authority and prestige could do something about it: some-
body ought to be beheaded.

L. Haward had told me before that they do not get proper
care because they seem to be in nobody's department. He
felt, and I think quite rightly, that they ought to be in his
charge; but somebody's departmental jealousies intervene.

I must stop. My wife and I join to send you our warm re-
gards, and I am always yours.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY.

This is admirably put. Gordon Bottomley's plays, in fact,
put me in mind of the Madox Brown paintings, of which
he writes, whose figures wear the dress of a remote past, but
are passionately alive, as though in the present. Bottomley
refers to earlier books of portraits. During 1929 I produced
a new set of drawings, among them one of Max Beerbohm.
Of this book Max wrote in his generous way:

My dearest Will,

It's a lovely book—say what you will against it! In course
of reduction in scale, and of printing, some delicacies and
subtleties must needs suffer; but really and truly it seems to
me that in an imperfect world this latest book of yours
should satisfy even the man whose work it inspires. Of one
thing I am sure; these latest drawings of yours are absolutely
your best. I don't know which are my prime favourites—
possibly Shaw, T. S. Eliot, and myself, and, oh! well, the
other nine. Very many congratulations. You gave me an
enchanted account of Nauheim; and I was quite sorry to
think of your having to tear yourself away. Still, I like to
think of you in the sequestered glades of Airlie Gardens and

amidst the sombre columns of the Ath. It seems a far cry from here to the Ath.; to Ramsay MacD., and D. S. MacC. e tutti quanti. How famous MacD. has become! I have a flair in such matters, and I felt, when first Florence and I met him at your house (less than a year ago) that he was somehow destined to go far, though he was at that time a mere obscure leader of the Opposition—his very name unknown to all but a few readers of Parliamentary debates: shy, ingenuous, innocent; anxious to make a favourable impression, but loth to thrust himself forward: blushing, stammering, pathetically grateful for a kind word or look. And now! Do you remember, by the way, that when you and he and I were lunching together at the Ath., you asked him how his tour through Lancashire had gone, and he answered, 'I was afraid.' 'Of what?' you asked. 'Well,' he said, 'the enthusiasm was so great that,' etc. We were moved by this high sense of unworthiness and these noble doubts. But it afterwards occurred to me that what he really had been afraid of was that the Socialist party might be going to sweep the country. Had this happened, he would, of course, have been compelled by his wild men to try and wreck the country; and this he wouldn't have at all liked. However, all's well. He's on clover, and likely to stay there for a goodish time.

For Ramsay MacDonald, Max felt, as a matter of fact, a warm admiration. By no means sharing the socialistic views of some of his contemporaries, he admired MacDonald for what he considered his good sense and public spirit.

Max was also an admirer of Galsworthy, of his novels especially, not then or now approved of by the intellectuals. (His plays he thought too tendential. 'Galsworthy has sold his birthright for a pot of message!' he said of these.) 'I thought Galsworthy's O.M. was exactly right,' he wrote. 'Neither Shaw nor Wells, the only other two men worthy, would have been suitable. Wells is a Republican and wouldn't have accepted the gaud. Shaw is really too irresponsible in his public utterances, and seems to grow more

Trials of and more so. I dare say he would have accepted, on some
Low principle of his own. But he would certainly have made a point of guying the whole thing to the first interviewer who came along.' But he had strong feelings about the claims of C. P. Scott for the O.M. 'No precedent would be created; for there never again will be an editor-proprietor of the Scott kind (nor indeed has there been one in the past). This would be one point to put to MacDonal'd. But the main argument, of course, is that C. P. Scott deserves the honour as well as any living man.'

There was another man Max admired wholeheartedly, David Low, and Low was going through a similar experience to that which Max went through in his early days of caricaturing. So much is Max admired to-day that the indignation his caricatures formerly aroused has been forgotten. I wrote to Low more than once of my joy in some drawing that appeared in *The Evening Standard*. 'Dear William Rothenstein,' he replied, 'I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your kind letter, for its penetrating sympathetic understanding. I had almost come to the conclusion that in England the alleged sense of humour was only sense of habit—that people were amused only by hoary jests which had become established by tradition and legend as 'Humour'—about 1 per cent. of newspaper readers has the independent judgment which can distinguish truly the incongruous and absurd in daily life. I incline to this depressing conclusion periodically because of the lots of letters I get from 'dumb-bells' who resent attempts to depart from the 'Comic Cuts' jokes which make the limits of their understanding. You can imagine, then, what pleasant experience it is to get such a letter from such a one-er as you—it is as heartening as three rousing cheers.' Indeed, Low tells me that scarcely a week goes by without he gets some insulting, even threatening, letters on the subject of his cartoons. No one is less understood than the satirist. It constantly surprises me how few educated people understand that the business of the satirist is satire. Men will speak of Shaw or of Low as though they



DAVID LOW



H.R.H. THE DUKE OF WINDSOR AS PRINCE OF WALES

were ill-mannered, tactless, at best preferring ugliness to beauty. A. E. Housman declared the critical to be rarer than the creative faculty. Of all the arts I would say that Satire is the rarest: Aristophanes, Lucian, Rabelais, Montaigne, Swift, Daumier and a few others, the list across the ages is a short one. Unfortunately, certain foreign nations, especially the Totalitarian States, resent any form of criticism, though by no means averse to denunciation of the democracies by their own press. But since their press is guided and officially controlled they naturally believe our Foreign Office is in part responsible for ours. Low, who has strong political convictions, and much political sagacity, is not likely to be the favourite cartoonist of either Hitler or Mussolini. For that matter he is not popular with our own politicians, who regard his satire as misplaced at a time when Europe's nerves are on edge.

At the Club during 1928, Cotton Minchen told me he was to be editor of a book intended to raise funds for the British Legion. He wanted my advice. It would be no more difficult, I told him, to get the best writers and artists to help him than the more popular ones who usually contribute to philanthropic magazines; he agreed, and found a ready response from all he approached. From me he wanted a portrait of the Prince of Wales, keenly interested, he said, in *The Legion Book*. Subsequently, on a dark November day, I was called to the telephone—a message from St James's Palace, would I come round in an hour's time, at 2.30, when the Prince would be ready to sit? But there would be scarcely any light after 2.30! How long did the Prince propose to give me? A quarter of an hour, I was told. But a decent drawing could not be made in a quarter of an hour. Might this be explained to the Prince and I be excused? Another appointment was made, under happier conditions.

The Prince lived in a modest apartment in a quiet corner of St James's. I saw only a single domestic, who took me through a room, plainly furnished, with two paintings of London by Samuel Scott on the walls, to a second room,

*The Prince
sits*

where the Prince, in a pullover, received me. Where would I want him to sit? and for how long? an hour; but of course. I found he had never sat seriously to anyone. Orpen, he told me, was to have painted him—the confounded fellow could never be got when he was wanted. He was nervous at first, but when I became absorbed in my drawing he soon settled down. I mentioned his paintings by Samuel Scott; but how did I know they were by Scott? the Prince asked. How pleasant his plain rooms. Yes, they had been arranged by a friend, he told me. The unpainted panelling was a fake—only one bit was genuine. And after the sitting he showed me over his bedroom, his bathroom, everything. Then he must go off to his dentist. When in the dentist's chair he might perhaps think kindly of me. 'I shouldn't need a dentist's chair for that,' he answered.

CHAPTER XV
A GREAT AMERICAN

IN an earlier volume I referred to my meeting with John Jay Chapman, whose son's portrait I painted in America in 1910. Now I heard from Chapman again:

*A great
American*

*Sylvania,
Barrytown-on-Hudson.
June 11. 1929.*

My dear Rothenstein,

My niece, Dorothy Kennard, has been staying with us here and has brought us direct news of you—after how many years!

In order to find your address I looked into *Who's Who* at a Club, and Oh my! what a man you have become—well, you deserve it any way. Your painting of Chanler¹ still hangs on the stairs where you saw it and we have always enjoyed it much: it is so English and so mid-Victorian, and we, though perhaps we are not very English are very mid-Victorian still—more so, perhaps, than ever.

Chanler is married and has a couple of very small sons. He and his wife dined with me at the farewell to Dorry. Dorry is full of her book-business and is bound that Cobden Sanderson shall reprint something of mine—essays presumably, and you are to be asked to write a preface. Nothing could give me more pleasure and pride, though my books have always left deficits on the publishers' ledgers, and . . . But is this any business of mine? I am not going to worry

¹ His youngest son.

*A great
American*

myself over that side of the matter. Meanwhile, it occurs to me to send you one as a souvenir and I am going to ask my wife which to send.

My wife says to tell you that she thinks of you every time she passes the portrait on the stairs and often wishes that we may meet again.

Yours very sincerely,

JOHN JAY CHAPMAN.

Chapman did, in fact, come over with his wife to England a year or two later, and I was delighted to meet this great man again. When, lately, his letters were published by Mr A. de Wolfe Howe I was again impressed by the strength and beauty of Chapman's spirit. In England Chapman, I suppose, would have been called a Tory democrat. He had strong moral convictions which made him a refreshingly independent thinker; at times the Left might claim him, at other times the Right. Chapman had an equally independent literary judgment. A classical scholar, he was entirely free from pedantry. He preferred Lucian to Plato, took a very personal attitude towards Shakespeare, Dante and Sophocles; of the two latter he made translations. 'A translator has privileges of his own', he wrote, 'and they are larger than those of the writer of a textbook, part of whose business is to expound the original and expose its grammar and syntax. He is teaching the language. But a translator is concerned only with the work that is under his eye and the meanings that seem to be implied in the context of any passage. He is not supposed to be learned. The impedimenta of Greek learning are so tremendous that only men of special linguistic endowment can support them, and this is only by devoting a life to the subject.'

His sympathies during the War were passionately pro-English. I had not seen Chapman since my visit to America twenty years before, when he impressed me as the greatest man I met there. I wrote to various friends in England about his work—his writings and plays—but no one appeared to

think so highly of these as I did. Later, I found that Robert Nichols shared my estimate of Chapman. Would that his sense of the greatness of England had been shared by our statesmen! He was in Germany on August 3rd, but managed to get over to England. Here, during the first twelve days of August he wrote:

*A great
American*

‘The fact is that Great Britain can retain her greatness only by pursuing the very opposite policy to that through which she gained her greatness. She grew great through an unconscious power of self-aggrandizement: she can remain great only through a conscious avoidance of self-aggrandizement. Have her statesmen the subtlety of mind to perceive this? The average Briton, at the present moment, reasons thus: ‘Of course we want nothing from the War. But if we win, we shall, of course, take the German Colonies.’ Such reasoning is natural but if acted upon it will prevent Great Britain from doing a great service to mankind—a service so great as to belittle her whole past history and to make her the star of the world.’

Wise words spoken too early; would they have been listened to later? Alas no, but what a chance was missed! and how lacking in forethought, in common sense, were both French and British statesmen.

CHAPTER XVI

A PROVINCIAL EXPERIMENT

*A summer
at Caux*

WE spent the summer of 1929 at Caux, in Switzerland, where we had taken a villa. Here I painted my son John and his wife on a kind of loggia, open on one side, overlooking the Lake of Geneva. This painting was lately acquired for the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris. It is supposed that many of the early Italian painters worked in a similar light—half interior, half open-air, a light quiet and diffused, with no strong shadows. I was certainly reminded, working in the loggia, of the *plein-air* effect of Fra Angelico's and Ghirlandaio's paintings.

Nearby, below us at Glion, were our friends, the Sydney Schiffs. Sydney Schiff, brought up to the luxurious ways of a wealthy continental banking family, had a long struggle before he found his own as against his inherited way of life. It was largely through his meeting with Violet Beddington, who became his second wife, that he found the integrating factors which made him a writer. He had for long been a warm supporter of the more adventurous among the young painters, of Currie, who met so tragic an end, of Gertler and John Nash, above all of Wyndham Lewis. Under the name of Stephen Hudson, Schiff has written one of the most revealing autobiographical novels of our time—*A True Story*. He became the friend of Proust, friend indeed of many writers and painters whose work appeals to his discerning mind, and after Proust's death he completed the translation of *La Recherche du Temps Perdu* begun by Scott Moncrieff. Like Arnold Bennett, Sydney was fascinated by the complex machinery, the competent luxury of a big

hotel; he would ask us to tea at one of the hotels to watch the dancing, and to dance himself. Reginald Turner, too, staying at Lausanne, would come over to our villa; no one was so entertaining as Reggie. As a talker he was remarkable. He was no monologist, and his repartees and exchanges across the table would put most comedy writers to shame. At Caux we also made the acquaintance of Geoffrey Dennis. His wife, Imogen, a granddaughter of W. M. Rossetti, I had known since her childhood. Dennis was with the League of Nations at Geneva, in the Translation Bureau. He found the atmosphere of political intrigue at Geneva depressing; he wanted to throw up his work there to try his fortune in England as an author; but the slight popular recognition his books had hitherto received made him hesitate. I did not then know his writings, but on our return he sent me one of his books, *Mary Lee*. I read *Mary Lee* and was at once under the spell of the strange passionate characters, and of the writing, which had something of the intensity of Emily Brontë's.

'Imogen showed me your letter', Dennis wrote, 'and I write to say what high satisfaction it has given me. *Mary Lee* is a crude book, jejune, conceived when I was very young, and some aspects of the second, the French part, border even on the pitiful. But the best of it seems to me, the forcedly unimpartial creator of it, to merit the high praise and understanding you allot. It is passion and truth, not "Ersatz" poured into the mould formula of these. My *ambition* as a writer is chiefly to give to other people this my vision of the unseen world, working thro' horror, nonsense, religion, brain, etc. upon us all, and to show (impliedly) that all that is wanted—that the only thing that is wanted—that the only thing that is worth anything—is love and pity: love and pity which are everywhere "short of the demand". . . . Meantime, if the *End of the World* fares as badly as all the others—and this I must expect—I shall probably never find a publisher again and I shall have to express my world for the benefit of myself alone!'

Shelley's
villa at
Lerici

Well, to work in this way for the benefit of one's self alone is the fate of most painters. The *End of the World*, however, though unlikely to find many readers, was awarded the Hawthornden prize, and this gave Dennis fresh hope and courage. But for the one unfortunate chapter, his *Coronation Commentary*, a brilliant defence of Royalty in England, with its moving presentment of the symbolism of kingship, of the Coronation ceremony, should have done much for Dennis's reputation and, incidentally, for his pocket.

In the early spring of 1930 we went to Italy to stay with Mrs Cochran at her beautiful villa at Rezzola, near Spezia. What an earthly paradise is Italy! where the mountain villas, villages, seaside towns, are so perfectly set in the noble landscape. Not far away from Rezzola are the Carrara Mountains, among which little towns and villages perch, each one supplying enough subjects for a painter to occupy him for years. Below lie the little coast towns with their pink, yellow and orange houses along the front facing the sea and running high up on the hillside. And such life along the sea front, where handsome young men and glowing young women walk in the evenings. How commonplace our crowds by comparison! At Lerici is Shelley's house, from the windows of which Claire and Mrs Shelley looked out, waiting, waiting for a sight of the boat which was never to return. The poet's house was then for sale. My wife—always impulsive—made enquiries, how wonderful it would be if it could be bought to be preserved for ever! But it was explained to her that in addition to the cost of the house an endowment fund for upkeep and repairs would have to be provided, so the project was dropped, to her disappointment.

Then there was Aubrey Waterfield's *fortezza*, an ancient castle with a roof-garden overlooking the Carrara Mountains. He had bought it for a song. I suppose for the price of a cottage in England. There he paints and draws flowers and mountain scenes. His sensitive work is too little known. His landscapes are especially beautiful, so too are those of Neville

Lytton, which again are insufficiently appreciated, perhaps because both these artists live abroad. *Return to Florence*

To the villa at Rezzola there came Oliver Lodge. He had motored through France. Now he wanted us to go with him to Florence; he would like to visit the galleries under the guidance of a painter. To Florence we went, but in the galleries and churches he found my taste all too austere. He would wander off with my wife to enjoy the more sensuous works, asking as he lingered before some nude figure of a beautiful woman, 'Now why wouldn't your husband think this good as a work of art?'

We wandered, too, about the streets and squares, the side streets especially. Many of the fine houses and palaces in the busier parts have been disfigured, their lower stories turned into shops. The same thing happens too frequently in England in our Cathedral towns, in Gloucester for example. Here dignified houses have been vulgarized by this crude amputation, for the shop fronts are constructed without distinction.

I wanted to take Oliver Lodge and my wife to I Tatti, the Berensons' villa at Settignano, but the Berensons were travelling in Greece, the villa was closed, so we could not see the treasures there. Happily, Reginald Turner, most genial of men and wittiest of talkers, whom I saw all too rarely, was in Florence. There, too, I met for the last time Ada Levenson, Oscar Wilde's 'Sphinx', a strange figure from the past, now grown old, but gay and vivacious still.

We went, too, to see our old friends Percy Lubbock and his wife, Lady Sybil, at the Villa Medici; Lady Sybil was unfortunately indisposed, but her daughter, the Marchesa Origo, was at the villa and charmed Oliver Lodge, sensitive as he is to physical beauty, combined with a fine intelligence. Talking with Percy Lubbock, I realized how much I missed through his being abroad; no one is better company than he.

We returned to Rezzola by way of Lucca, a favourite town with Max Beerbohm, and with Geoffrey Scott.

Before we left Italy, the *Queen Elizabeth* arrived at

Craig and
Cochran

Spezia. With Mrs Cochran and Sir Oliver Lodge we were invited to visit the battleship by Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield, being received as honoured guests and shown all that might interest us. It was fascinating to see how one man alone, sitting before a machine, could control all the great guns of the ship and direct them on to a single target. I hoped, in my innocence, this might be peculiar to an English battleship, but was told in these days there is no such thing as a secret monopoly. On the *Queen Elizabeth* we also met Admiral James, whose aunt, Millais' daughter, we knew in London. He was a typical sailor, direct and outspoken and with the charming manners these sailors have. I did not wonder Maurice Baring so enjoyed the hospitality of battleships.

Bidding farewell to Mrs Cochran's hospitable villa, we went to Rapallo; we could not leave Italy without seeing Max and Florence.

During the autumn of 1929 Gordon Craig came over to London from his home at Genoa. He was in high spirits—C. B. Cochran had offered him at long last a theatre wherein he was again to show his genius for staging plays. Max Beer-bohm, who was staying with us, was delighted that this time Craig, with Cochran behind him, would not disappoint us. There were articles in the important papers, a leader in *The Times*, enthusiasm among the younger actors. But first, Craig said, he must find a suitable theatre, then the right kind of players: not the usual professionals, but men and women who could speak verse and use gesture. Gesture! that was rare in England; I remembered how Geoffrey Scott had said, comparing English and Italian buildings, that no nation without natural gesture can have great architecture; and Craig told us how, in testing actors, he would ask them to say 'a beautiful woman' but how dully they said it compared with the gusto, the rich impasto of the Italian actor's 'O, la bella donna!' Nevertheless, he offered a part in a play to every charming woman he met at our house! He went to see two or three theatres which Cochran said were available. Then he declared only the old Lyceum would suit him. Un-

fortunately, the Lyceum was not available. We begged Teddie to be reasonable; surely he could make some other theatre suit his purpose, but in vain. And Craig withdrew, threw away, so it seemed to us, this unique chance. We had hoped he would put on a masque and perhaps Max's two plays, the original *Happy Hypocrite* and *A Social Success*; the latter had seldom been performed. It was not to be. I thought of Teddie's dear mother, Ellen Terry, of how she longed for recognition for his work. 'He is a genius. Yet his hair is quite white, and no one will give him his chance.' To have influenced the theatre throughout Europe and America, and yet to have produced so little in England since the nineties, what a loss! I have seen nothing to equal Craig's productions, save only those of the Habima Players. With them again, drama, interpretation, dress and scene made a perfect unity. Craig reminded me of Arthur Rimbaud, who also, in his early youth, gave a new form to French poetry and then wrote no more. Craig at least has produced plays abroad; and his talent for writing has never deserted him. Yes; Craig has many gifts. He is no mean artist. His woodcuts are bold and dramatic, especially those he made for Count Kessler's fine edition of *Hamlet* which he issued from his Weimar Press. When Kessler had to escape, at an hour's notice, from Germany, after the Nazis' accession to power, leaving all his possessions, he was most grieved at having to resign his press.

Craig is also one of the best letter writers of our time. So, too, is Max; but of late years Max has refused, save on the rarest occasions, to put pen to paper. Perhaps the increasing number of autobiographies in which letters are quoted make writers self-conscious. When I write to Max I address my letters to 'The Caves of Silence, Rapallo', knowing there will be no response.

Ramsay MacDonald came in one Sunday evening while Max was in London *en garçon* and was staying with us. In answer to the Prime Minister's enquiries about his health, Max said he had had a bad afternoon. He had met a friend

*Sunday
evenings at
Campden
Hill*

at the Athenaeum who begged for a copy of a poem in which the relative qualities of certain illustrious persons were in question, and later in the day he sat down and wrote out the poem on a lovely sheet of clean blue paper, and putting it into a beautiful blue envelope, took a taxi and went out to dinner. Arrived at his host's house, he found to his dismay he had left the blue envelope in the taxi. 'I pictured to myself', he told Ramsay MacDonald, 'entering the august portals of Scotland Yard, approaching the rather sinister person in charge, "I have lost a blue envelope." Then the sinister person would ask for particulars, and I would have to say, "Sir, the envelope contains a poem."' Ramsay begged Max to recite the poem, and having heard it said how amused the illustrious persons would be to read it. But Max assured the Prime Minister that he suffered agonies of remorse for his earlier ruthlessness. After all, he had been taught the elements of good manners by his mother, not to point to or to comment on other people's infirmities. 'I really do feel kindly towards people,' he explained. 'Only the other day I was speaking to Philip Guedalla of Peter Wright's attacks on Mr. Gladstone's personal character, when I suddenly remembered that Philip possessed a dreadful series of drawings, 'Gladstone in Heaven', done by me at the time of Gladstone's death. But Philip insisted there could be no comparison between Peter Wright's statements, made in cold blood thirty years after Gladstone's death, and my caricatures which were done under the instant shock of bereavement.' Happily, in spite of his kind heart, Max can make caricatures and write verses without the shock of his subjects' demise. There are drawings and verses by him on—but I must not be indiscreet.

When Ramsay MacDonald found that neither my daughter-in-law Elizabeth nor Max had visited Chequers, he asked us to luncheon there on the following Sunday. We were all enchanted by the beauty of the house, so generously given to the nation by Lord Lee of Fareham, and the Prime Min-

ister showed us the many treasures it contains, among them a death mask of Cromwell, which he discovered bricked up in one of the walls.

A fortnight before the end of 1930 there came a letter from Ramsay MacDonald stating that he proposed to recommend that a knighthood be conferred on me. I know not whether a hint is sometimes given beforehand; to me the proposal came as a complete surprise. I remembered that Walter Raleigh told me, on getting a similar letter, how he looked at himself in the glass, while shaving, and said, 'Damn it, I'm a knight.' (Eddie Marsh added another story, that Raleigh had said, 'I had to choose between being a butt and being a prig, and I chose to be a butt.') I was the more pleased, when the Honours List appeared on New Year's Day, to find myself coupled with Wilson Steer, who received the Order of Merit. This greater honour was due to him; no painter has pursued his art so consistently, so modestly, with a quieter zeal and so unflinching a conscience.

Dining with us one night, with Arthur Hurst and Max Beerbohm, Ramsay MacDonald told us of a kind deed of Duveen. When he lay seriously ill in New York he spoke of a certain painting by Gainsborough with which he had for long been in love. Duveen said, 'I have it,' and sent it to be hung opposite his bed.

MacDonald gave us an entertaining account of his visit to Mussolini at Rome. When he was leaving, Mussolini accompanied him to the station, where a long line of black-shirted legionaries stood to attention. Just as they arrived MacDonald's hat blew off, to go whirling down the line of soldiers, coming to rest on the feet of one of the men, whose face went into violent contortions of embarrassment, for he dared not move, his rifle at the salute. Mussolini sprinted after the hat and retrieved it. But this was not all; for as Ramsay, having said farewell to Mussolini, was climbing up to his compartment, the band struck up the English National Anthem, and he had to remain, with one foot on the platform and the other on the running board, while the band

An American Colonel played 'God Save the King' three times in succession, until Mussolini, furious, signed them to stop.

MacDonald also described a dinner at Lord Haldane's; Haldane, cutting, lighting and smoking a large cigar, talked philosophy—'I had one foot on Jupiter and the other on Mars; then suddenly Haldane pressed the stump of his cigar to put it out, and I came to earth.' Indeed, one of MacDonald's endearing qualities was his sense of fun, his enjoyment of the ironies and absurdities of life.

T. E. Lawrence sent me a message on my knighthood which pleased me: 'You have never been academic, you see; so the dignity has been won against opposition and is worth having.' And in the same letter he sent me several pages of careful criticism of *Morning Sorrow*, a novel my son John had written. At the end of the letter was a post-script: 'Excuse the pencil. I'm writing in a chair by the fire in a windy and spuming night, and the others playing round would knock my ink over, did I bring it. When it rains the hut fire gets thronged, after duty-hours. This is rather a wonderful camp, with the sea never leaving the quiet rocks just below our windows. We live on or in it, always tasting the salt.'

John had returned the previous year from America, where he had held the position of Assistant Professor of Art History, first at the University of Kentucky, Lexington, and then at the University of Pittsburgh. While at Lexington he became engaged to one of his students, Miss Elizabeth Smith, of an old Kentucky family, and thus came into touch with the ample, easygoing life of the South, so different from that of the northern states. This led to a surprising conclusion; for some years afterwards he was made a Colonel on the Staff of the Governor of the State, Ruby Laffoon! Two years after his return from the States, he was appointed Director of the Leeds Art Gallery, and two years later of the Art Galleries at Sheffield, and through him I again had close ties with Yorkshire. I knew the country round Leeds, for it was equally the country about Bradford, familiar to me as a



MY SON JOHN AND HIS WIFE ELIZABETH

boy, as was the wide moorland in the Sheffield district. East Yorkshire I knew less well, though I had stayed at Bransby with my friend Hugh Fairfax Cholmeley, in his farmhouse, enlarged by Detmar Blow, which was full of Gimson and Barnsley furniture. Now I returned to this part of Yorkshire to stay at Helmsley with Athole Hay, at his brother Robin's house, Skurkill. Athole was a contemporary of my son John at Worcester College, Oxford. About Helmsley lies noble country; but I missed the austere stone barns and farmhouses, of which there were so many in the West Riding. Of fine mansions there was no lack. Burton Agnes, with its lovely pink brick, and Newborough—Mrs Hohler was anxious I should see the treasures there; but on our way to Coxwold dark clouds were gathering; a storm was blowing up and when we got to Newborough the house was so dark we could see nothing. Mrs Hohler rang for lights; a butler brought a single small lamp, which scarcely lighted the tea-table, leaving the room darker than ever. Nevertheless, our hostess took us round the great house, carrying a small torch, turning its light on to vast canvases a few inches of which alone were visible. Under these conditions it was difficult to support her generous attributions of the paintings. But the genuineness of the uniform worn by her grandfather at Balaclava, as the torch lighted up its bright braid and buttons, was indubitable.

We went more than once to Rievaulx, to the remote and haunting valley where the ruins stand, silent and imposing. When I first saw Rievaulx some forty years earlier, a tangle of bushes and briars filled nave and transepts; trees had grown up among the crumbling walls, and nature herself seemed to have taken the old Abbey buildings, neglected of man, to her bosom. Now Sir Charles Peers, sent by the Office of Works, has cleared away trees and undergrowth, restored the floor levels, freed and repaired the walls and saved them from destructive roots and the embrace of clinging creepers. Some regret I felt for the wilder, unrestrained appearance, no doubt beautified, as memories are, by the

years. Duncombe Park nearby, like other great houses, now serves as a school. The present owner, Lord Feversham, was rebuilding a more modest house for his own use, for wide acres, once a rich investment, are now a liability. His mother, Lady Marjorie Beckett, had been extremely kind to my son and his wife when they came to Leeds. Kindness with her is instinctive; it gives a warmth and a glow to her presence. Her husband's name was a familiar one in my childhood, for Beckett's Bank at Leeds had been my father's bank. Staying with Lady Marjorie and Sir Gervase at Kirkdale I met Anthony Eden, whose father and mother I had known in the nineties, when Whistler was painting Lady Eden's portrait, which led to the famous quarrel with the Baronet. It was through my acquaintance with Sir William Eden that I forfeited Whistler's friendship.

Sir Timothy Eden's *Tribulations of a Baronet* is an astonishingly lively presentment of his eccentric father. I have heard people speak harshly of this kind of parental portraiture, of which Daphne du Maurier's biography of her father is another example. But surely these vivid presentments are more endearing than the flawless effigies, modelled by filial and wifely piety, like waxen fruit under glass.

There was Castle Howard too, where Geoffrey Howard occupied a few rooms only of Vanbrugh's splendid pile. If owners of such palatial mansions were content, Geoffrey Howard said, so to live, more of these stately houses might be preserved. He regarded his tenancy as a trust. But these great places are an anomaly; unless a use be found for them they are unlikely to survive the housebreaker. And the country house has a cruel enemy—fire. While we were at Skurkhill a message came—a fire had broken out at Castle Howard. Knowing Geoffrey Howard and his wife were away, and that only their daughter, Christian, was at home, we hurried to the Castle. Happily we arrived to find the flames already extinguished. A few rooms only had suffered. All the pictures including the famous Canalettos had been carried on to the lawn. So far as we could see none of them

had suffered damage. Among the few works that were burned were some by Lord Carlisle, which hung in the rooms where the fire broke out. I have always liked Lord Carlisle's paintings; they have so much of the period, the period of Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, and the Italian painter, Costa.

There was another Italian painter, Soldi, a Florentine, who must have gone from one great house in Yorkshire to another, for I saw portraits by him in most of the houses I visited. A contemporary of Hogarth, an excellent draughtsman, his portraits retained something of the severity of the Florentine tradition, unexpected in an eighteenth-century painter. I could hear, on returning to London, little information about him; he appears to have been extravagant, more proud of being a Florentine gentleman than an artist, and to have died in poverty. I have seen no portraits by him save those in Yorkshire, and have heard no one refer to him or his work.

I spent part of the summer at Bradford, where I made some gouache drawings, at Chellow Dene and about Haworth. Haworth I found little altered save that the mill girls no longer wear shawls and brass-tipped clogs, but have bobbed hair and neat, smart clothes and shoes. The parsonage, a parsonage still when I knew it fifty years ago, with the gloomy cemetery under its windows, is now a museum; but the moors still reach almost to its door; the Bull Inn is much as it was, and though many of the houses have shop fronts, which give a more cheerful air to the once bleaker main street, Haworth still retains its original moorland character.

I stayed at Heaton, near my brother Charles's house. From Heaton we used to walk straight into open country. Now a municipal housing scheme has been carried out, unfortunately ill-planned and charmless. It would seem that good taste in England went out as local government came in; these rows of villas, set at all angles, common to all counties, will stand in the way of rational planning for many years to come.

My brother Charles, unfortunately, was no longer alive. He died in 1927. He had kept his house in Bradford until his death; a house full of treasures from attic to basement. About 1891 he bought some paintings by Conder, and gradually acquired drawings, paintings and sculpture and formed one of the most important collections of modern English work in the country. In his later years he thought much about social conditions and having done well as a partner in my father's firm, he sought a way of giving back a proportion of his assets. He gave anonymously £12,000 to the Chancellor of the Exchequer after the war, and set about a plan, in accord with his ideas, whereby his collection should be of practical service. He finally decided on Manchester as a centre from which the works forming his collection would be available, as loans, to galleries and art schools in the north. He put forward his intentions at the Manchester City Art Gallery on July 15th 1926, which merit quotation; for his project contains within it seeds which have already proved fertile:

'I had been meeting my brother and his circle of friends in Paris for a year or two—this was in the early nineties—then he moved to London where he settled down permanently. There too I frequently went on business and again through him I met a number of young artists. These were the pioneers of a new and vigorous movement in English Art which has since become known as "The Romantic Nineties". Among them, besides my brother Will, I might mention Charles Ricketts, Charles Shannon, Max Beerbohm, Steer and Walter Sickert. This group inspired me to commence acquiring a few examples of interesting work amongst the younger English artists.

'Shortly afterwards I became a regular visitor to the Exhibitions of the New English Art Club which brought me into touch with such personalities as Muirhead Bone, Gerard Chowne, Augustus John and his sister Gwen John, Charles Holmes, Ambrose McEvoy, David Muirhead, William Orpen, Joseph Southall, Wilson Steer, Henry Tonks, and, of course, my brother Albert.

'I had now come to the conclusion that the cultivation of the modern school of English art was well worth while and I decided that this must be my definite policy. I think I may say that I have consistently carried it out up to the present day as you may observe from the works on these walls of such painters as Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Mark Gertler, Eric Kennington, Henry Lamb, Wyndham Lewis, J. B. Manson, John and Paul Nash, C. R. W. Nevinson, Lucien Pissarro, F. J. Porter, William Roberts and Edward Wadsworth, and amongst sculptors, Frank Dobson, Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill and William Simmonds.

'I may say incidentally that later on I began to collect examples of ancient oriental pottery, bronzes and carvings which developed into an ever-increasing mania. I felt, however, that my duty was with the living as well as with the dead, and that my present-day artists, in many cases unrecognised, were morally entitled to support.

'I felt too that works of art ought to be accessible to all who desire to enjoy them. It seems to me that a possessor of works of art is a trustee to the public and is not entitled to keep them to himself. It was perhaps easier in my case to maintain this ideal because I found that I had accumulated more than I could actually hang. I came to feel that its circulation in groups amongst a number of galleries, schools of art and other educational bodies might have great advantages over a permanent home in one gallery. I experimented with this idea in my native city and commenced some years ago to lend original drawings as well as reproductions of ancient and modern paintings and sculpture to the Bradford School of Arts and Crafts. It occurred to me that the scheme of borrowing originals and reproductions from London had the drawback that the loans to schools of art are usually made for a minimum period of a year. I felt that the students lost interest in them after the first session and I decided that my loan should be changed for each of the three terms. I have reason to believe that my policy has met with approval, not only from those in charge but from the students themselves.

*A gift to
Man-
chester*

After a time I extended my loans to the Bradford Technical College at the request of the Principal who shared my feeling that some good might be achieved by giving the textile, engineering, chemistry and other students at his college an opportunity of seeing reproductions of fine works of arts and crafts on the walls of their corridors and original water-colours and drawings in their reading-room. These are changed from time to time and apparently they are welcome additions. News of my experiments in Bradford penetrated to other centres and I have lent selections to schools of art in Halifax, Harrogate, Birmingham, Leicester and Oxford as well as to Sheffield University. I had now gained the conviction that my entire collection might be made use of in connection with art galleries as well as schools of art and I decided to offer it to some central distributing institution with that object in view.

I began by sounding certain authorities in London about three years ago as to whether it might be possible either to find or to found some institution there from which my collection with the subsequent addition of others could be circulated in small groups among some of the art galleries and schools of art all over England but outside London. Subsequently, I consulted Mr Aitken, the Director of the Tate Gallery, explained my scheme, hinting at the same time that I might be disposed to make a beginning with part of my collection during my lifetime. He gave my suggestion his hearty approval and we both agreed that the best solution would be one of the big centres outside London such as Birmingham, Liverpool or Manchester. Of the three, Manchester appealed to me most. Your deep interest in music which led to the formation of the famous Hallé orchestra and afforded numerous other opportunities of hearing the finest creations and best exponents of that beautiful art; the importance of your university; your celebrated Rylands Library; your remarkable experiments in the theatre; your production of one of the greatest newspapers in the world under the able direction of Mr C. P. Scott; and your municipal art gal-

lery, so well managed and possessing one of the best collections of pictures, sculpture and other works of art in the provinces; all these acted as a great attraction to me and influenced me strongly in my choice. And Manchester is near my native city so that my own county of Yorkshire could easily be included in any scheme taken up.

‘Pending the completion of a new art gallery which will, I understand, occupy several years, the collection is to be housed in Platt Hall whence the loan will be distributed and where that part of the collection which is not on loan will be exhibited. It is my hope that various galleries and schools of art in Lancashire and Yorkshire will apply at regular intervals for small selections to be sent to them for exhibition during a period of say three months. It ought then to be possible for some galleries to have, say, three different selections in each year that they may, if they so desire, have virtually a constant addition to their permanent collection which, in the case of the smaller galleries, may prove very useful. But I should like to emphasize that my particular desire is that the various schools of art should take advantage of the facilities which the collection can offer to them of giving the students an opportunity of seeing fresh examples of original work, each session, on the walls of the building in which they are actually studying. And here I may say that it is essential that this loan collection should be constantly increased by gifts from any collector or well-wisher who cares to contribute to it, whether in the form of original works of art, of good reproductions of fine works of art, or with money with which to purchase either. There is no intention on my part of confining the scheme to this gift—far from it—and I sincerely hope that it will prove a sufficiently strong inducement to attract other gifts or even bequests.’

In the catalogue of the Rutherston Loan collection at Platt Hall details of the scheme as at present practised are as follows:

‘Each loan is limited to thirty examples, in order to facilitate simultaneous loans, and to encourage borrowers to apply

*A per-
manent
loan
collection*

for further selections. The maximum period of the loans is twelve weeks, and, in order to coincide as nearly as possible with the work of schools of art, the authorities of which, in Mr Rutherston's view, were likely to be the largest and most frequent borrowers, the periods have been made to approximate to the normal school of art terms. Thus works are available from the third week in September until the second week in December; from the second week in January until the first week in April; and from the first week in May until the last week in July. The fixing of periods was thought advisable at the outset to obviate the overlapping and confusion which would inevitably be the result of loans made without such restriction, but it is provided that this arrangement shall not be rigorously adhered to in the case of applications from art galleries for examples which are actually available if the dates proposed for the loan cannot conveniently be made to correspond with one of the periods mentioned above. The conditions governing the loans are those usually required of institutions borrowing works of art, namely, that borrowing authorities shall defray the costs of transport, and of insuring the works against all risks, both in transit and whilst on exhibition. Due acknowledgment of the source of the loan is expected to be made in a preface to any catalogue or leaflet that may be published, and reference should also be made to the objects of the scheme, in order that it may become widely known, and as much advantage taken of it as possible.' So successfully is the plan working that when, lately, I visited Platt Hall to renew my acquaintance with the collection, I found but a couple of paintings and a few drawings—the rest were out on loan.

CHAPTER XVII

BENNETT AS A 'CHARACTER'

I USED to get friends to come and talk to the students in their Common Room at the Royal College of Art. T. E. Lawrence came, Rabindranath Tagore, Middleton Murry, John Drinkwater, G. K. Chesterton and Walter de la Mare. De la Mare read an enchanting paper on Edgar Allan Poe; I heard him read another on Desert Islands; surely those lectures of his are masterpieces of their kind. *A Lama at the College*

We also entertained a Tibetan Lama and his attendant disciples—*chelas* they are called in India. I met this holy man at a reception given by Clough Williams-Ellis and his wife, when we were all asked to bring presents, offerings to the Lama, such being expected, we were told. The Tibetans had been brought to England by Colonel Ruttledge and his party from the Everest Expedition. I gathered that they were somewhat disappointed at the slender hospitality shown them, so I invited them to a reception in the students' Common Room at the Royal College of Art. Cushions were placed upon the stage and the Lama took his place in the centre, the young monks on either side; these last provided with trumpets of enormous length. I asked a number of people besides the students to meet them. Hymns were chanted by the young monks, who also drew powerful, ear-splitting blasts from the trumpets; afterwards the guests were presented to the Lama, each offering a small gift. Then his holiness asked, through his interpreter, that the lady students be presented, when he was quickly surrounded by a circle of radiant young girls in their brightest attire; nor did the holy

*A new
Professor
at the
Slade*

man seem displeased by the living posy gathered round him, nor by the sight of the white necks and arms and the warm smiles of the young women. For before leaving he placed a fine white scarf about my shoulders and presented me with a sacred text, written on strips of palm leaves, in noble Tibetan script. He also consented to come to my studio, where he sat in his high-pointed yellow cap and his beautiful ruby and saffron robes. His interpreter told me he was indeed one of the holiest abbots in Tibet; that for five years he had sat, immoveable, in a cave high up in the mountain, his simple food brought up to him daily by the villagers below. Unfortunately, perhaps because my studio was larger than a cave and its atmosphere more clement, after sitting still for ten minutes the Abbot grew restless and I hastened to get my drawing done.

I had made drawings some twenty years earlier, at Darjeeling and Goum, of Tibetan Lamas, but none of so holy a man. I was told that when the abbot returned to Tibet he met with disapproval for taking part in sacred rites, as a show, merely. I am told, too, that the art of painting the once beautiful Tibetan banners is now largely lost; I hope on this point I have been misinformed, for when I was at Goum, in the monastery there, I saw some freshly painted banners which, if not equal to the fine old banners, were still skilfully carried out.

During 1930 Randolph Schwabe became Slade Professor in succession to Tonks. I was glad to be one of his sponsors. Drawing is the tradition of the Slade School and Schwabe is a dignified and scholarly draughtsman. He has also a wide and impartial outlook on the arts, and a generous sympathy for gallant experiment as well as for disciplined achievement. So, too, has Allan Gwynne-Jones whom I had chosen to be professor of painting at the Royal College of Art, and who now deemed it his duty to give up his professorship that he might support his friend Schwabe at the Slade School. Gwynne-Jones has the painter's eye and the craftsman's hand. There are few contemporary painters with his fasti-

dious sense of the use of oil paint. Yet he gets little of the recognition which is freely given to clumsier, less conscientious craftsmen. It was Gilbert Spencer who took his place as professor of painting—the most unprofessorial figure imaginable. In my opinion students should follow, at least in an initial stage, a method laid down for them. Gilbert had no such belief, but was unerring in detecting promise, as a scavenger will spot something precious in a rubbish heap. His appearance on the College diploma day when in coloured shirt, flowing tie, flaming red pullover and ancient flannel trousers under his gown and hood, he led up his students to receive their diplomas from the hands of the eminent person presiding was certainly not professorial! But Gilbert can get away with anything. Barnett Freedman who was in charge of the still-life painting was likewise a character; indeed seeing that the College is a government institution, under the respectable wing of the Board of Education, it wanted something of the decorum associated with Whitehall.

But Whitehall was indulgent; a little uneasy at times, perhaps, at its responsibility for so unorthodox an institution. Perhaps the nearest the higher, austere officials of the Board approached to a gay life was on the occasion of the fancy-dress dances in the students' common-room, when bright youth was in charge, and dress was less usual than undress.

We had an evening each week at our house when students would come from the College and sit silent, listening to Ralph Hodgson, James Stephens, Max Beerbohm or Gordon Craig. Arnold Bennett, writing to his nephew, thus described one of our evenings:

'Last night we had supper at Professor William Rothenstein's (head of the Royal College of Art). It is a very interesting house, where the only tobacco offered is Gold Flake in the form of cigarettes, and where thousands of young girl art students appear after the meal. Also poets. I met a poet who sells his poems in single sheets from door to door at 6d. a piece. He seemed to me to be a very nice fellow, and specimens of his wares, which he showed me, were rather good.'

*The charm
of Bennett*

The poet to whom Bennett refers was D'Arcy Cresswell, a young New Zealander who earned a precarious living by selling his poems as Bennett describes. He had talent and assurance, and he pitted his ideas on literature against those of major writers, past and living. Some of these ideas he put forward in a book he called *The Poet's Progress*, which had some success in literary circles. I sent a copy to T. E. Lawrence, always curious, and usually kind, about new talent; he thought 'the book was queer. Something real to say and a borrowed voice to say it in. That was queer, because Cresswell is not young enough to be permitted affectation. I felt, however, all through, that behind the style a quite honest personality was hiding. He has, I am told, won a good deal of credit and some abuse for the book. So perhaps he will be encouraged to go further. Anybody who writes a very good first book is doomed.'

I found Cresswell's company stimulating, but he could at times be irritating. Though his own writing was mannered, I learnt much from his sense of words and his rigid ideas on syntax.

He was not inclined to follow up his initial success and, having time on his hands, he read over everything I wrote, challenging my meaning and clarity, to the advantage of the final text of my first volume of memories, which appeared in 1931.

Why it should have seemed interesting to Bennett that we offered Gold Flake cigarettes to our guests puzzled me. Must only Turkish or Egyptian tobacco be supplied in a self-respecting household?—and to thousands of girl students too!

Bennett was a 'character'. His portly figure, his queer stammer which he learnt to use to his advantage (for one had to wait on his delayed utterance), his tilted nose, receding chin and upstanding hair gave him a Balzacian presence—he somehow reminded me of a literary César Biotteau, come up from the Midlands to be a figure in London.

No one enjoyed social life more than he; but 'when I am

seriously at work on a long book,' he wrote to me, 'I have an absolute rule against going out to lunch. It ruins my day.' He liked to act the man of the world. 'I am, and always have been, strangely against artists of any kind differentiating themselves from the rest of mankind in social matters,' he wrote again, 'my opinion is that an artist should be a citizen, breadwinner, taxpayer, debt-payer, before he is an artist.' None the less, his fame and the material advantages it brought, pleased him. He liked being recognized at theatres and restaurants: 'I will tell you a tale about Ellen. I was once sitting in the stalls of a theatre and I heard a fussy, restless woman behind me, then a hand was put on my shoulder. Ellen Terry said: "Mr Bennett, you don't know me, but I know you."'

Bennett came one day to ask—had I a copy of the *Goncourt Journals*? He had tried everywhere in Paris to get the volumes, without success. I was surprised to hear from him that they had not been republished. Though I knew the *Goncourt* novels were now little read, I had thought their journal of permanent interest. I lent Bennett my copy; and I wondered later, when extracts from his own journal appeared, whether he had been inspired by the *Goncourts'* example.

I delighted in Bennett. He was so human in his enjoyment of life, of his own success. He was generous both as host and guest and was, moreover, something of a patron of the arts. On his walls were paintings by Bonnard, Sickert and Conder; there was a portrait of André Gide by Fry, and there were all sorts of amusing oddities and Victorian bric-à-brac about the rooms. He rather fancied himself as a man of taste, and gave much thought to his dress. Dining with us one night he attacked the placing of the pictures in the National Gallery, not realising that W. G. Constable, who was dining, too, was Assistant Director there. Constable challenged him to name any picture that was badly hung, and Bennett, in a difficulty, admitted he had not been at the Gallery for three years. He tried, however, to describe a particular painting, finally saying he thought there was a good

Bennett's advice to the young deal of red in it! After dinner he confided to my son, John, that he had made a fool of himself. *Made* a fool of himself! was Max's comment on the incident.

Bennett gave warm encouragement to my son John and wrote a generous review of his first novel, one of the last he wrote for *The Evening Standard*. John went to tea with him at Cadogan Square, when Bennett gave him elaborate advice about writing and how to deal with publishers and editors. When he was helping him on with his coat, he looked, characteristically, into his hat. 'Lock!' he said, 'my dear John, you've no business to get your hats at Lock's until your earnings are up at least 150 per cent.!'

It was to Bennett I owed the encouragement to use an unaccustomed pen. Urged by my son John to write some early memories, I jotted down a few of the things I remembered, and Bennett, hearing this, and being interested in the period, asked to see them, upon which he wrote pressing me to continue. Though I had no notes, never having kept a journal, I did as he advised and when the first volume of my memories was printed I sent an early copy to Bennett. Alas, he was then lying ill in his new flat in Baker Street. He had written to me but a few weeks before: 'I want us to meet very much. But we are just beginning to feel the throes precedent to the exodus from this house. These throes will not be finished for another month, and in the meantime the present house has some resemblance to Armageddon or a Hill 60.' During a visit to Paris, while the new flat was being got ready, he developed an attack of typhoid from which he was not to recover. I missed Bennett. No one quite filled his place. As a writer, however, he had done his work. His last book, *Imperial Palace*, was of a massive dullness.

I am reminded of another massive work, Epstein's figure of Christ, about which, when it was shown, crowds stood in silent and puzzled awe. Augustus John came into the gallery. A lady detached herself from the circle to ask for John's opinion. John, looking steadily at the great stone figure, spoke but one word—'Imponderable'.

I forget whether it was about this time that Epstein exhibited at the Academy a head of Einstein, one of his finest bronzes, a profound interpretation of his great model. It was later, when protests against the mutilation of Epstein's figures in the Strand were made, because no representative of the Royal Academy joined in the protest, that Sickert resigned from that august body. The same year Stanley Spencer, who had been pressed to become a candidate for Academic honour, and had been elected an Associate, also resigned, following the rejection of two of his paintings. Thus the Academy lost two of its most important members. True, John¹ remained, and continued to show portraits so vital they made up for the many photographic presentments—MacColl called them *negative* portraits—which are hung yearly at Burlington House.

¹ Since the above was written John, too, has resigned from the Academy.

CHAPTER XVIII

FIGHT FOR WATERLOO BRIDGE

*The last of
Orpen and
Ricketts*

DURING the year 1931 William Orpen, my brother-in-law, fell ill, so dangerously ill, we soon heard, that he was unlikely to survive. To the last he clung to life and, habitually industrious, to his work. 'I have not missed a day here from work (trying to!)' were the last words I had from him. Indeed, his zest for painting was constant. He could always be depended on for a reliable portrait; indeed, I doubt whether he ever made a failure, and many of his portraits are brilliantly painted. He could not be put beside John as an interpreter of character, of women's especially. But he had an individual whimsical mind which found early expression in his *Hamlet* and his *Kermesse*; and in the drawings with which he illustrated his letters. Portrait painting absorbed him, to the neglect of his more fanciful gifts; true, he returned to these during the war, but could not rise to the full tragedy of the war scene. He was at his best at Versailles. His studies of the statesmen and generals there present were masterly, above all those of the young airmen, generally done in a single sitting; and he showed a keen appreciation of the bitter scene in the Hall of Mirrors.

Then came the news of Charles Ricketts's death. The friendship of Ricketts and Shannon was a famous one, and his grief over Shannon, who never recovered from the concussion, due to a fall from a ladder while hanging pictures, undermined his never robust health. Shannon lived on, but his reason never returned. Ricketts was the last of the artist scholars. His all-embracing connoisseurship had the solid

basis of his own fastidious practice as draughtsman, engraver, jeweller, designer, typographer, sculptor and painter. He seemed to have seen all paintings, all objects of art, and to have read all books. In his own circle he was the acknowledged leader, sole arbiter of taste, pouring out suggestive ideas by which his friends could benefit, summing up questions aesthetic, giving judgments on men, on works of art, on the events of the day, social, political, on the theatre, on dress (he said once that he would make a good woman's dressmaker, a finer Poiret or Doucet), on poetry, philosophy and music. He was no doctrinaire; his ringing laugh and quick sympathy with character and talent, his attentive charm as a host allowed of no pedantry, in himself or in others. If he saw little in present-day art to compare with that of the great periods, he was ever ready to recognize fresh talent, among young people especially. But if he lived much in the past he was also an eager and responsive guest in the house of the present.

A Latin at heart, as he partly was by race, Ricketts was essentially civilized, full of the lightness and ease of fine culture. The English he looked on as barbarians with their puritan suspicion of the moulds, dark as some of them are, from which so much beauty emerges. He was in a sense a decadent, with something of Huysmans' relish for moral and aesthetic perversities. Someone compared him to Rossetti. 'No,' he objected, 'Rossetti was one of the original minds of his time. I am not that. I am a spectator doubled by the actor. That means I am a critic. I am the greatest spectator I have ever known.' And how enchanting his wit! I remember his telling how as a young man he was stopped in the street by a stranger who said: 'I am a painter, would you sit to me for a figure of Christ?' The stranger was Frederick Shields, then preparing paintings for Herbert Horne's Chapel of Ease. After the sitting Shields prepared tea, but from the pot came only water. Shields excused himself: he had forgotten the tea-leaves! 'No,' said Ricketts, 'it was my miracle.' When his correspondence with the Michael Fields is pub-

A letter from Manning lished Ricketts will appear as one of the wittiest letter writers of his time.

Frederic Manning wrote one of his finely critical letters on the subject of Orpen and Ricketts, and on other matters:

*The Bull Hotel,
Bourne, Lincs.*

14. 10. 1931.

My dear Will,

When I read of Orpen's death, and again when I read of Ricketts's I took up my pen to write to you, and then put it down without writing a word. I had the same impulse with regard to Rhyllis' and the same intuition operated. I admired both men, for many different reasons, but I knew neither. I admired Orpen because in his work he represented an aspect of reality which he had assimilated: that is to say he represented his own individual relation to that of reality: it was a fact which he saw in the terms of his scales of values; and in the process of assimilation the reality regained coherence, and proportion, and reason. It was a generalization: but it was the generalization of a specialist. I don't think Ricketts ever attained to that power of generalization. I think he mistook a convention for a generalization: in his work he is always proposing, not an hypothesis about reality, or a compromise with it, but an alternative to it; and from the philosophic point of view there isn't any possible alternative to reality. Ricketts was much more of a magician than a philosopher. You spoke of his *Einflusslust*; that was the individual contingent, imp . . . selfconscious of the magician. I admire him because he did succeed in imposing it on his surrounding circumstances. He had so many technical accomplishments; but his real aim was to create for himself an illusion which would be more tolerable for him to live in than the real world, probably in dealing with the latter he had quite a practical appreciation of its necessities. Well, I didn't write to you, as I say, because you stood in a more personal relation to the two men than I did; but I knew

you would feel the old world vanishing *Singula da nobis* . . . *A letter
from
Manning*
If Rhyllis is still with you give her my love. I shall write to Dornoch. As for my letter as a recruit, you must do as you think best; very likely you are quite right about it. I think every writer has the sense of insufficiency which you experience in correcting your proofs: and it is quite explicable, for words and phrases are only the traces of the experiences of the author in representing his world, not the experience itself. I don't think any reader ever experiences the same emotional tension and excitement as the author does: only the significance of the traces enables him to realize, or induces in him by their cumulative effect, *a more or less* similar experience. I think your style and manner perfect for the material with which you deal; and I think they have quite sufficient variety to be applied in other fields. I met King while I was abroad and quite a lot of interesting people; Emil Ludwig became rather angry with me, because I admired none of his idols, and I said that civilization was being devoured by its rats. What you say about the madness of the present times I have been saying ever since the war; and indeed before it. I am a Tory. There isn't any Tory party at present. The two men I have some confidence in are Neville Chamberlain and Lord Reading. Much love to all,
Yours always affectionately,

FRED.

P.S. Our real error is in admitting equality with other nations: that is the fallacy behind all internationalism. France's insistence on maintaining security by armaments is one of the reasons for the flow of gold there. America refuses to be drawn into any international commitments. Her intervention in the discussion of the Manchurian problem by the League is exceptional, momentary, and not disinterested. We also should free ourselves and seek a purely national policy. A true equilibrium is brought about by every nation developing its utmost: weakness leads only to dissolution and chaos.

*The
civilized
man*

It is interesting that Manning should have singled out Neville Chamberlain at this time.

Gordon Bottomley wrote of the pleasure I had given Ricketts by what I wrote of him and Shannon in a previous volume. 'We read of his death (Ricketts's) in a standing train in Cardiff Station, and time seemed to stop. For thirty years I never wrote anything without thinking what he would say about it: and his disappearance is as though one had lost the use of a limb, as though a wing of one's house had been closed and locked for ever. I still cannot bear to think he would not be there if I went . . . it has been a heavy year of losses and he was the greatest loss.'

I, too, looked back gratefully to the evenings with Ricketts at Townsend House. I missed his hearty laughter, his enjoyment of the good things of life, his quick response to the subtleties of art. He was the civilized man, personified. I used to tire of the constant talk of Manet in the conversations in Ebury Street, to which Steer responded with gentle sleep and Tonks with his Slade voice of authority, with the equally constant substitution of Ingres as an alternative topic. For Moore, so sensitive to language, had no pictorial sense; he admired the objects wherein he recognized the few landmarks he had learned from painters; to most others he was stupidly, and assertively, blind.

How ineffectively George Moore reproduces the conversation of his friends! With the exception of Edmund Gosse, they serve as mere foils to his own divagations. Who would suppose Walter de la Mare, reading his part in the *Conversations in Ebury Street*, to be an enchanting talker, throwing out delicate feelers to draw from others their final conclusions on the problems of life and death? Moore makes Steer talk like a literary man; but Steer's talk is prosaic, and comfortable, though notable for the sanity of his comments on painting, made without emphasis, and made only when called for. Steer does not go out of his way either to praise or disapprove. He would leave such matters to Tonks, whose judgment, if less sure, was more emphatic. But Moore's

character drawing of his painter friends, apart from his reporting, is good; of Steer and Tonks, excellent. But of all Moore's portraits, none is so complete as his own. I wonder, reading his books, whether he knew how fully he displays himself and his confused sense of values, his capacity for truth and untruth, his companionability and his caddishness, his silliness and again his unexpected simplicity and engaging charm. His self-portraiture, at least, stands as a supreme tribute to his artistic integrity. Not since Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* has any dialogue been written so revealing of silliness as Moore's with Mrs Harley-Caton. Hazlitt's self-revelation came through a passing obsession, Moore's through a permanent strain of stark insensibility. And I doubt whether, with all his striving after great prose, he wrote anything better than his unclothed presentment of himself, side by side with those of his Dublin sitters in *Hail and Farewell*.

James Stephens, speaking of Moore's writings, told us that Moore was not only in the painters' debt for his ideas on painting; that when he, Stephens, was struggling to make a living in Dublin, Moore had sent him the plot and the characters of two stories he wanted to write, asking him to supply the dialogue. The situations Moore suggested fitted ill with the plots; Stephens recast the stories, rewrote them in fact. Many letters passed between him and Moore and these letters, some years later, he returned to Moore, receiving, he said, no acknowledgment.

It is not surprising that Moore wanted Stephens' help; he was shrewd enough to recognize qualities in Stephens he himself lacked. For Stephens could go to a vague and legendary past and make it a living, passionate present. He is the Irish Homer, whose heroes are fierce fighters and ardent lovers, and whose heroines Deirdre and Maeve, lovely as Helen of Troy, are the cause of the killing of noble men and the wasting of cities.

I wonder such books as his *Deirdre*, and *The Demi-Gods* are so seldom spoken of; to me they seem among the few

Moore, great books of our time; yet Stephens writes to me regarding
Steer and Deirdre: 'Your letter from the blue bucked me up. 'Tis a
Tonks good book but that is the first time since it was published
that anyone said so. 'T was stillborn of the War.'

Formerly, I saw much of Moore. We met at Steer's, or at his own house at Ebury Street, or at Tonks' or Harrison's in Cheyne Walk. After I returned from the country to live in London I saw less of my New English Art Club friends. It was a friendly but somewhat narrow company, shut in by Tonks to the East, Moore to the North, Steer to the West and MacColl to the South. Tonks, used to his word being law at the Slade, liked it to be law elsewhere. I wanted a larger room, with more window space. Tonks would do anything, would spare himself neither time nor trouble, for his students at the Slade. He was less generous to those unwise enough to study elsewhere. Like the Inquisitors of old, he sincerely believed in the wholly catholic Slade; all outside were heretics. So at the New English Art Club the best places were reserved for the orthodox. The Dictators of the other independent group were Roger Fry and Clive Bell, who declared war on all who would not accept their ideology.

The Royal Academy was easy-going compared with these 'free' institutions, accepting or rejecting outsiders according to no particular policy, certainly not an academic one, but afraid of encouraging 'extremism'. A temperate sensuality is encouraged, but indecency must be rejected.

Ricketts's death and Shannon's retirement through illness was a serious loss to the Academy, for they were its two most scholarly members.

I succeeded Ricketts as painter-member of the Royal Fine Art Commission. Just before my appointment to the Commission I was asked to see the Brangwyn panels which had been painted for the House of Lords, but rejected on the adverse criticism of the Fine Arts Commission. It was in the first instance unfortunate that Brangwyn should have been chosen to provide paintings for Pugin's Gothic interior.

Pugin's work has a value of its own; it is not to our taste to-day, but none the less it represents a genuine phase, a part of architectural history not dissimilar to that of the Praelaphaelites in painting.

*The Royal
Fine Art
Commission*

Equally Brangwyn's work has its place in late nineteenth-century English painting; but its tendency is directly opposed to that of Pugin, and it is regrettable that some other setting had not been chosen for these robust examples of Brangwyn's full-blooded art.

As a member of the Royal Fine Art Commission I was now to be in close touch with architects. Those I had heretofore known most intimately were our neighbours in Gloucestershire, Ernest Gimson and the two Barnsleys. Henceforth I could observe the ways of Lutyens, Blomfield and Gilbert Scott, architects who played larger parts on the stage of stone and brick. I marvelled at the readiness with which these busy men gave their time to the many problems with which the Commission had to deal. The Commission is fortunate in its chairman, Lord Crawford. It seems to me no small thing that one who has held high office in more than one government should devote himself entirely to the work of the Fine Art Commission and the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Zeal for public service is an honourable tradition in the great English and Scottish families. Moreover the respect in which public servants are held gives them an authority as chairmen, which, I thought often during the meetings of the Fine Art Commission, no architect or artist could exercise to the same degree. One of the most active members is Lutyens, so ready with his pencil when making or amending a plan, ready too with his tongue. There is no subject upon which he fails to make some ludicrous quip; he has an expansive goodfellowship which sometimes masks indifference. Reginald Blomfield, with a more aggressive manner than Lutyens, has a warmer heart. Positive, bellicose yet cosy, Blomfield has a very vital, a very likeable nature. Gilbert Scott, reserved, quietly sure of himself, I had known as architectural

*The
wanton
destruction
of Waterloo
Bridge*

visitor to the Royal College. D. S. MacColl was no longer a member of the Commission when I joined it; but he continued to be a gallant fighter for good causes. While the destruction of Waterloo Bridge was under discussion he was an impassioned advocate for its retention, and when, after a long fight, the project for its replacement by a new bridge was rejected by the House of Commons, we believed the battle finally won.

Reginald Blomfield (after some hesitation, since he had been approached as a possible advisor for a reconstructed bridge), had also fought gallantly for the cause of Rennie's masterpiece, and we proposed to celebrate the victory by a dinner to MacColl and Blomfield. But MacColl had misgivings, he wrote:

My dear William,

When I spoke to you of a Waterloo celebration I am sure you did not suspect me of having anything personal in mind—I thought of a London procession or something of that nature. But it is just like you to wish to make much of anything your friends can be congratulated on and I am touched by the warmth of your feeling and generous proposal. All the same, I would rather the part I have been able to play should not be over-stressed. A good many have lent an indispensable hand; and the team must be held together, and we are not yet out of the wood and ready to halloo.

Will you therefore thank those who have had this kind intention and be sure that I am none the less grateful to you and to them in discouraging it.

Yours sincerely,

D. S. MACCOLL.

MacColl was right. We counted without the jealousy of the L.C.C. and the maleficent energy of Herbert Morrison. 'Shepherd, the old towers fall, this is the end.' It was the end of something deeply significant, of an older, seemlier and more modest London.

We have many authorities, but no authority. Year by



THE EARL OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES

year more and more houses of artistic and historic value are demolished. Factories are springing up along the new roads, followed by rows of cheap villas put up rapidly by speculative builders, joining London to Slough, Uxbridge and Kingston, bringing more millions to an already over-swollen capital. The pioneer example of garden cities is ignored. Unplanned suburbs, large as towns, swarming with cheap houses, a mean agglomeration of brick and unseasoned timber, with no centres of recreation, no libraries, without squares and parks, are preparing future slums. Not on hoardings only, but in every available space crude advertisements are plastered, across railway bridges, on the sides of houses. Each time I pass the north side of St. George's Hospital it vexes me to see the crude posters there which disgrace Hyde Park Corner. I got into touch with Lord Greville, who is Honorary Treasurer to the hospital. He regretted the posters, but explained that they bring an important sum each year to the hospital funds. At least they could be shown so as to deface less flagrantly one of the finest sites in London. The Royal Fine Art Commission submitted a project for an architectural framework on which the posters could be displayed in a more seemly way. But nothing has been done. And since the Commission has no executive powers this needless disfigurement of Hyde Park Corner remains.

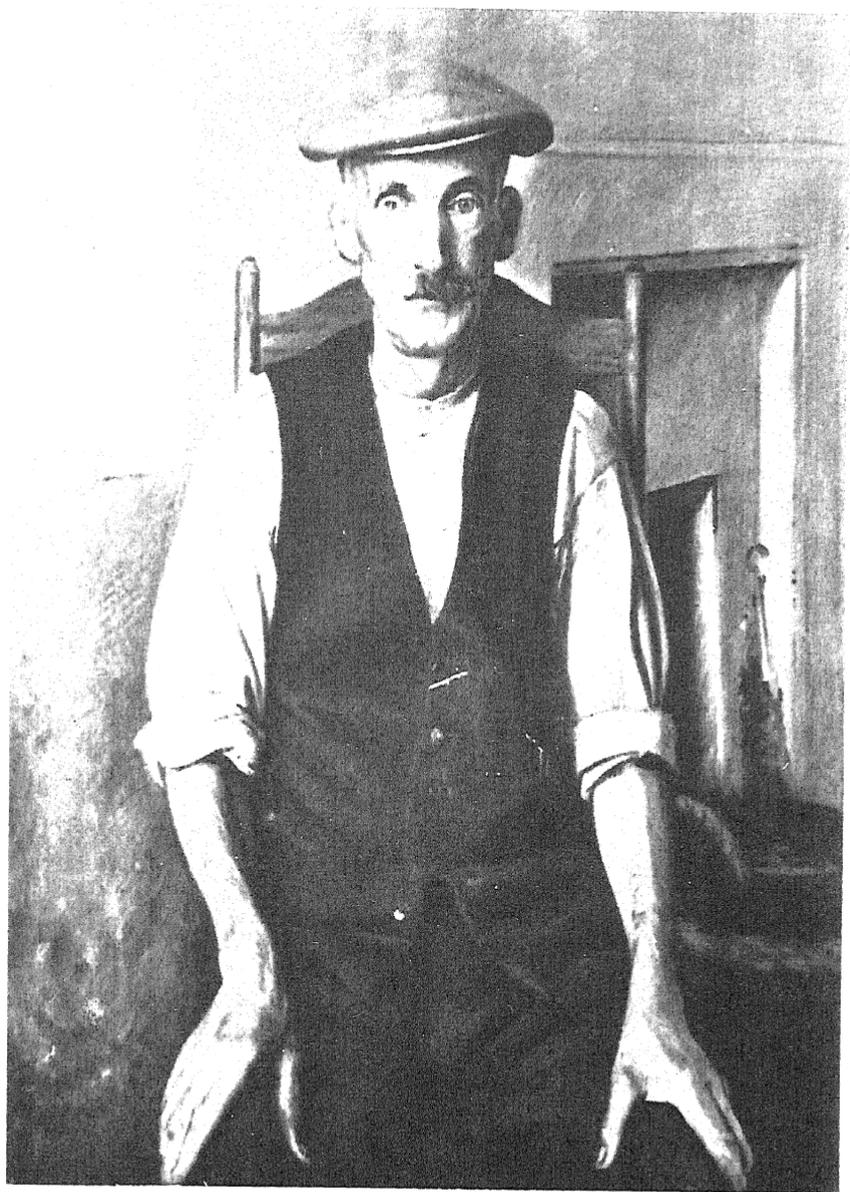
There are laws and bye-laws made by Parliament, County and District Councils, but one sees confusion grow. In despair, a Council for the Preservation of Rural England, a National Trust, a Scapa Society are created to effect what they can where public policy lags.

As long ago as 1870 Verlaine described London as 'cette incroyable ville . . . immense, bien qu'au fond elle ne soit qu'un ramassis de petites villes, cancanières, rivales, laides et plates; sans monuments aucuns, sauf ses interminables docks'. We, at last, were privileged, since we had a foothold in the least spoiled county in England and in one of its quietest corners. Whenever we could get away from London we spent many days there; and again an urge to build came on

*Country
building*

me and we decided to enlarge one or other of our cottages. Two of these were tenanted; but the man and his wife who occupied one were looking out for a more convenient cottage. They found a suitable one and moved away. Then we reconditioned it. Finally, we decided to add a new wing. The work, as before, was done by our village masons and carpenters. I know nothing so absorbing, so satisfactory as this kind of planning and building. The Oakridge stonemasons are known as among the most skilful in the district, we could have fine stone chimney pieces, the cabinet work throughout of clean oak and chestnut, and the cost of building was little more than two years' house rent in London! The sense of putting something good and useful into a corner of the country is to me a happy one, as it is to know able men well employed. The pleasure to be got from living in a cottage so built and furnished has proved enduring. I earlier described the noble stone house built for the Claud Biddulphs by our one-time neighbour, Ernest Barnsley. Year by year the genius of Mrs Biddulph has added some beauty to house and garden. Familiar as the house has become during the years, each time we go to Rodmarton it is with undiminished pleasure. There are other houses, too, in the neighbourhood, the Birchalls' at Cotswold Farm, the Cadburys' at Througham Slad, the Lingards' at Elkston, the Sadleirs' at Througham, to which a fresh lease of life has been given.

I realize it would be out of the question to expect in the large buildings, which the more successful architects have to design, the same care for the details which is given to work in smaller domestic houses; but even in their domestic work none of our architects have, to my mind, reached the perfection of craftsmanship which Gimson and the Barnsleys achieved. For Gimson had trained his smiths and his cabinet-makers and carpenters to such a high pitch of skill that he could count on an exceptional standard of work, and Sidney and Ernest Barnsley were equally fastidious. At the moment when this conscientious and fine craftsmanship was possible, a new attitude to architecture was coming in, when a machine



OUR GARDENER

finish was the aim, and steel and concrete and veneer were to replace stone and oak and walnut. What might have been a new incentive to architecture became its swan song. Those who would see this last phase of local domestic architecture in England must come to the Cotswolds, to Rodmarton, to Cotswold Farm and Elkston.

From father to son the Oakridge men have been skilled stonemasons. Now I am told few young men apprentice themselves to this work, and it looks, since brick buildings are beginning to replace the older stone ones, as though the skilful handling of stone will become a lost art. Watching a stonemason at work one sees with what care and judgment he shapes each single stone with his heavy two-edged stone axe and hammer, while setting them together in courses. With like care the tiler arranges his courses of stone tiles on the roof, each course having its own size of tile, large at the bottom and growing gradually smaller. Old George Hunt, the tiler, had a stick on which the size of each course was marked, and each course had its own name, he told me.

One has to admit that the thick walls built to support the stout timbers which hold up the heavy tiled roof, and give charm to the broad window sills, to the window seats in the width of the masonry, are no longer necessary. In fact they are an attractive and tempting extravagance. No doubt other materials will be called for, needing other kinds of skill. For in the English tradition of building, that of the country house is the most persistent and fertile. The English love of the garden helps, too, to keep it alive. How often I admire the taste shown in the garden which, within the house, may be indifferent. Here is an art which is to-day probably more perfect than at any previous time, one which does not break with the past, while it brings a sense of comely order, and a radiant beauty, to cottage and manor alike.

CHAPTER XIX

PAINTINGS AT INDIA HOUSE

*An Indian
Eisteddfod*

I TRIED to persuade my friends at the India Office, Sir Arthur Hirtzel, Sir Malcolm Seton and Sir William Duke, to direct the attention of the Viceroy and the wealthier Princes to the desirability of providing work for Indian artists, who suffered much from lack of encouragement. I suggested something in the nature of an Eisteddfod, to be held every five years in a different province, where poets, musicians and painters might come together and be, in some manner, acclaimed and recompensed.

Herbert Fisher, long interested in India and ever ready to further any project which appealed to his gallant nature, wrote on the subject of an Indian Eisteddfod:

‘When you have a moment to spare sketch out for me your idea for these Indian Prize Competitions in music and art. Do you think they should be civic or provincial or both? And would it be feasible to have an All-Indian Competition? And how would the juries be constituted?—the real difficulty is that the Government will give the prizes and yet in all the public services there may not be a man fit to judge a picture, a poem or a melody.’

Naturally what I had in mind was that Indians alone could judge of the quality of Indian art, music and poetry. I believed, too, that if Indian artists could be employed on work, with a content likely to encourage a larger vision and a livelier handling, vitality might return to Indian painting. The so-called traditional methods and subjects have none of the vigour which some of the humble village families of painters still retain.

I wrote to Lord Irwin, pressing the legitimate claims of Indian artists on the Government. Not long after I heard from the Viceroy, who asked me to come out to India to advise the Government on the decoration, by Indian artists, of Sir Herbert Baker's legislative building at New Delhi. There were dissensions, it appeared, among the different Indian schools and impartial advice was called for. Much as I should have liked to revisit India, to find myself again among the Sannyasis at Benares and with Tagore and his gentle pupils at Santiniketan, I did not care, while the political temperature was so high, to get involved in local rivalries; nor would my health stand the atmosphere of the Red Sea. Meanwhile, Sir Atul Chatterjee, then High Commissioner for India in London, warmly supported by Sir Herbert Baker, had in mind the decoration of India House by Indian artists. This project was sanctioned by the Government of India who asked me to select four from among six artists chosen by a committee in India, who were to work under me at the Royal College, where there was an experimental studio wherein they could acquaint themselves with the various materials used for mural painting. (I found one of the six sitting outside my door at South Kensington before the selection was made!) The four young painters chosen quickly settled down and gained much from the practical advice of Professor Tristram and E. M. Dinkel. What they most lacked was the habit of working together; but a design made in common for the decoration of the dome of India House was perhaps the most successful of their paintings. Three of the artists chosen by the Committee in India turned out to be Bengalis, the fourth came from the Tipera State. This, I was to discover later, was displeasing to the Bombay School.

Before the paintings were finished, Sir Atul retired from the office of High Commissioner. This was during 1931, when the King and Queen came to the inauguration of India House. As she was leaving the dais the Queen, always quick to recognize those whom she knew, however slightly, sent

*Abuse from
'The Times
of India'*

for me to present me to the King. He was in a cheerful mood, talking gaily, and much more at his ease than when I accompanied him before the paintings at St Stephen's Hall. Thank Heaven he had no paintings to look at here! For the paintings were not sufficiently advanced to be seen, though the painters attended the function, beautifully dressed in white garments. Sir Atul's successor at India House was Sir Gupendranath Mitra, a financial expert, with no sense of the arts, who sent for me constantly, fearful always that the painters were idling, and again doubtful of the reasonableness of their claims to payment. It was for me a trying position. My relations, so far as their work was concerned, with the young painters were of the happiest, but the demands made on my time were excessive, and I resented being called on to act as a sort of policeman.

When the four artists had finished their work and were returning to India, I wrote to Lord Willingdon, then Viceroy, hoping, since they had successfully carried out work in common, work of a similar kind might be found for them at Delhi or elsewhere. He at once replied:

*The Viceroy's House,
New Delhi.*

21. 3. 32.

Dear Sir William,

It is a bad business that we have to cut down so many useful things, but 'needs must be' is the only thing I can say and I hope the turn will come soon. We will do all we can for the young men when they come out.

Yours sincerely,

- WILLINGDON.

I heard that I was severely attacked in *The Times of India* for favouring artists of the Calcutta School as against those from Bombay! To my surprise extracts from my private letter to the Viceroy were quoted in one of *The Times of India* articles! How a letter to the Viceroy got into private

hands, and then into the press, was a mystery to me. I was the more glad I had not acceded to Lord Irwin's earlier proposal!

*Abuse from
'The Times
of India'*

After two years of considerable trouble supervising the artists and their work, I got a brief note of thanks from the Government of India and much abuse from other quarters. There are so few in England interested in Indian art and literature that these few are much beset. The wife of an eminent scientist, for instance, was sure I could help her husband to become a Fellow of the Royal Society; another wanted a knighthood; another again an honorary degree at Cambridge; painters wanted commissions for Royal portraits, and others, whose claim was generally based on a few feeble copies of Indian paintings and enlargements of photographs, desired the Diploma of the Royal College of Art; and since I had been instrumental in getting Tagore's first book of poems printed, poems for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, other aspirants sent me their verses believing I could be equally helpful to them.

I did not then imagine that Tagore was to give a fresh lead to Indian artists, away from the imitation of old subjects and methods, towards a more vigorous use of the brush. It happened that one evening at Airlie Gardens, while Max Beerbohm was staying with us, C. F. Andrews was announced. He entered the room, his arms raised aloft like a messenger coming from afar to bring important news, saying, 'Gurujee is making lines!' Then I heard from Tagore himself:

*Villa Kahn,
Cap Martin
March 30. 1930*

Dear friend

Surviving series of mishaps on the way we have at last arrived in Europe after a prolonged voyage of 26 days. I intend to spend some weeks in South of France till it gets warmer when I am expected in Paris. I suppose you know I have my invitation to lecture in Oxford possibly in the be-

Tagore ginning of June when I hope it will be tolerably warm in
turns England.
artist

I find that you already know that of late I have suddenly been seized with the mania of producing pictures. The praise which they had won from our own circle of artists I did not take at all seriously till some of them attracted notice of a Japanese artist of renown whose appreciation came to me as a surprise. Some European painters who lately visited our *Ashram* strongly recommended me to have them exhibited in Berlin and Paris. Thus I have been persuaded to bring them with me, about four hundred of them. I still feel misgivings and I want your advice. They certainly possess psychological interest being products of untutored fingers and untrained mind. I am sure they do not represent what they call Indian Art, and in one sense they may be original, revealing a strangeness born of my utter inexperience and individual limitations. But I strongly desire to have your opinion before they are judged by others in Europe. I do hope it is not utterly impossible for you to come to this beautiful villa and stay with us for a few days. I shall only be too happy to bear your travelling expenses and shall do my best to make you comfortable.

Ever yours

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

And some weeks after Tagore himself appeared, bringing several hundred drawings for my inspection. He had been showing them in Paris, and some of the French artists had even found in them, he said, a new inspiration. A small number were shown by the India Society in London, but I fear Tagore was disappointed, they made little impression on English artists; yet the drawings though in the nature of dream drawings had a strange vitality and showed a healthy departure from the somewhat effeminate drawings of the contemporary Bengali School. Indians themselves are beginning to tire of the weak reflections of the Mughal, Rajput and Ajanta painters. Here and there are more hopeful signs, a more masculine treatment of Indian contemporary life.

But when one thinks of the extravagant power of the sculpture at Muthera, at Elura, Marmallapuram and Elephanta, of the paintings at Ajanta and the vitality of the later Rajput and Mughal paintings, it is to wonder at the decline of the arts in the East. Tagore himself wrote:

‘What you have said in your letter about our modern artists I fully agree with. It has too often been evident in all departments of our life the fact that when we are pushed into a wider freedom from the narrow enclosure of our tradition that has become anachronistic we begin to build new walls and create another impasse before us. This happens almost in all countries but in India it has grown chronic owing to our utter lack of zest in life and inertia born of continual despondency.’

But would not an intelligent Japanese or Indian artist, coming to Europe, seeing the Parthenon, Chartres, Bamberg and Versailles, say the same thing of contemporary sculpture in Europe? He might well do so; but would yet have to admit, though the great periods are in the past, a vigour, an inventiveness, a tireless search for new forms in the nineteenth and twentieth century work which show the arts to be still vitally alive in Europe.

There was a promising Indian student at the College, Uday Shankar. His father was Diwan to the Maharaja of Jhalawar whom I generally saw when he came to London. One day the Diwan came to the College: he regretted his son must give up his studies. I discovered his father had tempting offers from someone who wanted an Indian dancer. I urged him to reconsider his decision; his son had real talent as a painter—it would be a shame for the sake of money to cut short his career. Later I heard that Uday had joined Pavlova in America. I thought of him as a lost soul. Then a year or two later he turned up with a company of dancers and musicians. He was to give a few performances in London; I went to one of them. I saw at once I had been wrong; Uday Shankar’s dancing, his poise and gestures, had the grace and gravity I saw in the players and dancers in

*The golden
book of
Tagore*

India. The musicians had the same gravity as they sat before their zithars, vinas and drums. And the women! what exquisite gesture in their hands, what reticence in their movements. I had been shocked more than once seeing so-called Indian dances by women whose immodest dress and movements were entirely without the delicate sensuality, the bashful quality of the Indian Bayaderes. There was a religious atmosphere throughout Uday's entertainment. I went behind after the performance to offer my congratulations. Catching sight of me he at once left the circle surrounding him and bending low, to my embarrassment, he made the gesture to take the dust from my feet. He returned more than once with his company to London. But each time his stay was too short to allow of anything like the support he and his company deserved. Augustus John, Epstein, Henry Moore and Ethel Walker were all attracted by the performances. So were some of the poets, Binyon, Gordon Bottomley and Sturge Moore.

During 1931 I heard from India of a volume to be offered to Tagore on his seventieth birthday. All sorts of eminent people, including Einstein, were invited to write laudatory messages to the poet. At the last moment it appeared that Shaw, Yeats and two or three others had not replied to the Committee's repeated invitation; I was asked to whip them up. 'To the devil with these Nitwitiketant idiots!' Shaw replied: 'I spend half the year telling them to put my name to anything they like that will please Tagore, and the other half telling you to tell them so. I know by bitter experience that these people who fasten themselves on the birthdays of the eminent and beg unspontaneous and worthless messages are all over the place—but I haven't any room to let myself go. Tell them for the fiftieth time to put my name and be d—d!'

Yeats, too, was bored by this heavy flattery it was proposed to offer Tagore:

4th September, 1931.

Your letter about Tagore reminds me of my sins. I did

get some letter on that subject months ago, but one gets into a dream over one's work and forgets such things. Heaven knows whether I will send them anything or not or if I do whether it will be in time. Probably I shall send nothing because I hate sending mere empty compliments and have time for nothing else. I shall write to Tagore privately. I shall have plenty to say when I have not to remember that other men are looking over my shoulder.

I shall certainly let you know when I am in London. You are one of the very few I still want to see.

The Golden Book of Tagore duly appeared, in a form which at least did credit to Indian printers. I do not know whether the poet relished the many flattering encomiums which flowed through the book. I thought of a phrase in one of Years's letters: 'Do you remember a saying quoted by Max Müller from an old Indian text "One thing will never go out of the world, the vanity of the Saints".'

Max Beerbohm made an amusing caricature of me during the War in which he chaffed me about the Ajanta paintings, on the subject of which I no doubt bored my friends for a while. Perhaps if my admiration for the genius of Indian sculpture had been shared by others, I should not have tired my friends on this subject. I wrote a preface to a book of selected examples of Indian Sculpture in the British Museum and the Indian Museum at South Kensington and again an introduction for a large and weighty work on Ancient India, by K. de B. Codrington. My friend, Eric Maclagan, was reluctant to acknowledge the qualities of Indian sculpture which to me were outstanding; happily he gave a free hand to Codrington at the Indian section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, where Codrington, through his intelligent selection and arrangement of the exhibits, has succeeded in giving a fair idea of the Indian genius. Laurence Binyon, though he could not give to Indian art the complete admiration which Chinese painting and sculpture drew from him, at least responded warmly to its appeal.

Binyon falls ill It was not many months after Orpen's and Ricketts's death that Binyon fell seriously ill and for a few days we were concerned for his safety. I, too, had recently come through an attack of pneumonia, to which Binyon refers in his letter:

*British Museum,
W.C. 1.*

28th December, 1931.

My dear William,

Your letter was a great pleasure to get. You know how much I prize your friendship and sympathy, and it was good news that you have come through your illness, of which I heard when I was in hospital but wasn't allowed then to write. It will have been an anxious time for your wife. Cicely too has had a bad time in that way—much worse than I, for I knew nothing of the danger I had been in till I got home. I can't tell you how good everyone at Guy's was both to her—they let her stay at the hospital the most critical night—and to me, who was spoiled by the charming nurses. It was rather heavenly all the same to get home again after seven weeks there. I have now a long convalescence before me, as I am told I ought not to go back to work till Easter. I wonder if I can keep idle so long!

I am reading a novel by Leo Myers about India in Akbar's time, though not a historical novel at all. It is beautifully written and full of thought. Have you read it? It isn't complete yet as there are to be three parts. I first read Part II (I can't remember the title) and now I am reading Part I, called the Near and the Far: I am writing a brief life of Akbar—had done about $\frac{2}{3}$ when the operation intervened. Do you know the Jesuit Monsoriate's Book? I find it extremely interesting, as a first hand account of the first mission to Akbar.

Do go and see my little exhibition of Indian art at the B.M., if you haven't already.

Wishing you both all good—from both of us—

Affectionately yours,

LAURENCE BINYON.

I do hope there will be a chance of seeing you soon. I'm still laid up most of the day—but tottered out for a few steps yesterday. *A life of Akbar*

This was the first I heard of Leo Myers' great novel, the three parts of which appeared later under the title of *The Root and the Flower*.

When Binyon's *Akbar* was published, it was prefaced with a dedication to me; a compliment which touched me, since my affection for Binyon and my admiration for some of the noblest poetry of our time, had been unchanging over the space of many years. He wrote from

*Bright Ward,
Guy's Hospital,
S.E. 1.*

19th March, 1932.

Dear William,

I have ventured to dedicate to you a little life of *Akbar* which I have written for Peter Davies. Do you mind? Biography is something new for me, but I hope it won't be thought too bad. P. Davies is bringing out a series of short biographies, and I wonder if you would like to do one for him. He suggests Mahomet, but I expect would be glad of any subject that appealed to you. Forgive pencil, I've had to have another operation, as the old wound wouldn't heal and things had gone wrong. I have a lot of pain but they say the essentials are all right and I hope to get home in a week or so. I am very tired of being ill.

Have you seen the Japanese Statue which I got made in Japan for the B.M.? It is of extreme beauty.

Best wishes,
Yours ever,

LAURENCE BINYON.

Happily, Binyon recovered in due time. I, too, had some weeks of convalescence after pneumonia, when I was somewhat worried, as I was to give my first broadcast, The National Lecture on Art, and must not only write it, but

A first broadcast deliver it, and I was uncertain whether my voice would hold out. I arranged for a substitute, in case it should fail. I found the atmosphere of Broadcasting House, where one was received by beautifully mannered attachés, akin to that of an Embassy. I was fortunate in being given into the capable charge of Miss Hilda Matheson, who took me in hand, gave me counsel and confidence, and told me afterwards I had not disgraced myself.

CHAPTER XX

FAREWELL TO A 'SOUL'

GEORGE MOORE, in his conversations at Ebury Street, *A forgotten painter* makes mention more than once of the painter Anquetin (whose name he mis-spells each time) who at one time was looked on as the leader of the French independent painters. Toulouse-Lautrec regarded him as a coming master. Then I heard he had forsworn painting in despair at being unable to reach the standards he held to be necessary for a painter. I had seen nothing of him since a visit he paid to London some thirty years earlier. I enquired often from French friends, but his name is now barely known. Suddenly there came a letter from him. He had read some extracts in the *Mercure de France*, in which I had spoken of his early achievements, which plainly pleased him.

62, Rue des Vignes, XVI^e,
Auteuil, 1928

Monsieur Rothenstein,

Je ne suis pas mort—bien que mon silence prolongé ait vous le fait croire—je ne suis pas mort, mais depuis quatre ans ma santé a été soumise à des assauts constants qui m'ont mis complètement hors de combat. J'espérais toujours une accalmie, une reprise de santé qui m'auraient permis de vous remercier avec la chaleur voulue—obligé d'y renoncer je ne veux pas néanmoins cette fois laisser l'année s'achever sans vous dire combien j'ai été touché de vos sentiments à mon égard.

Que de souvenirs vous avez rappelé là, cher Monsieur, que de souvenirs, et aussi que d'espoirs . . . espoirs déçus. Hélas, que notre génération a sombré dans l'abjection.

*A forgotten
painter*

Quand notre bon ami Conder vivait, j'espérais une résurrection de l'art, j'espérais même pouvoir y contribuer personnellement en m'acharnant à apprendre beaucoup de choses qu'on ne sait plus depuis longtemps. Mais la folie démagogique a consommé définitivement la ruine de l'art. En se ruant sur lui les foules l'ont anéanti—car l'art est jalousement réservé à des natures d'exception, et, de plus, il requiert une sensibilité des dons et des connaissances qui ne sauraient être à la portée de tous.

Maintenant tout est fini et pour longtemps. Pourtant l'art n'est plus à inventer. Son langage a été constitué en entier, et il n'y a plus qu'à le retrouver, à le remettre en pleine lumière et à apprendre à s'en servir chacun selon son tempérament.

Pardonnez-moi de m'étendre sur cette question qui me tient tant à cœur—et permettez-moi de vous dire, cher Monsieur, que vous avez dit de moi des choses beaucoup trop belles. Certes j'étais bourré de plus nobles intentions—mais c'est tout, hélas! car je n'ai pas pu les mener à réalisation. Mon rêve était de transmettre ce que j'ai retrouvé à d'autres plus jeunes qui, eux, seraient certainement entrés au port—les circonstances, la mentalité d'une époque désastreuse ne me l'ont pas permis.

Croyez, cher Monsieur Rothenstein, à toute ma gratitude, à mes excuses empressées et à mes meilleurs souvenirs. Mais surtout, maintenant que vous connaissez les causes de mon silence, ne me gardez pas rancune.

Bien à vous,

ANQUETIN.

Lundi, 28.

What a dignified, what a proud and modest letter! How rare such honesty, such strength of mind. For Anquetin's gifts were of a high order; but he was too arrogant to measure himself beside contemporaries whom he believed to be traitors to the craft of painting, and was too honest not to know that painting, as it was once practised, is a lost art.

Our young men believe that Paris counts for everything—that only there can an artist get inspiration. They would be surprised at such a view as Anquetin took: or they would say, perhaps, that it was because he looked back, that he lost his way. Nor was another French artist, Jacques Blanche, who had known the great painters of the nineteenth century, happy in the twentieth century Paris. In sending me his novel, *Aymeris*, he wrote:

19, *Rue du Dr Blanche*,
Auteuil.

June 5th, 1931.

My dear Friend,

I hope you got my book. You will, I dare say, feel somewhat depressed at the sight of the paper it is printed on, one out of the thousand instances of the present conditions of the publisher, in this country, and of general despondency. Nobody any longer dares taking their risks, publishers and picture dealers foremost, the market being in a state of incredible collapse.

I am not going to complain; yet it is sad to think that in another ten years nothing is to remain except a sort of muddy paste of what was called *a book*! Comparing the beautiful print, paper of your memories, the way they were got up and the propagation things written in English are bound to, all over the world.

Your beautiful, brilliantly composed and achieved work, in the best English, reminds me of so many people, 'milieux' and places I have most enjoyed in my past life—that I cannot refrain *comparing* also the *atmosphere* I moved in so unpleasantly in Paris—to the civilized, friendly company of artists and other distinguished people. Had I been established for good in your country—yes, even as a foreigner (which always seems difficult and is more and more so, I fear) I do think that I might have done quite differently. My 'climate', as we say, decidedly was yours; I feel it each time I set my foot upon the British soil—or when I read British literature. It is odd, indeed, considering how pro-

*The
châtelaine
of Stanway*

foundly Latin, French I am. Often have I discussed the question with my dear old Henry Jones.

All that I am hinting you may have deciphered in many passages of *Aymeris*, the one work—out of all my painter's and writer's output—I attach more importance to.

Affectionately yours,

J. E. BLANCHE.

'Our climate', as Blanche calls it, was certainly an agreeable one. Besides our many friends in town we have our country neighbours. Besides the Biddulphs at Rodmarton, there was Lady Wemyss at Stanway and Eliza Wedgwood in her cottage at Stanton, close by. Before we had a car Stanway and Stanton were out of our range; now they were easily within it. Eliza Wedgwood, Lady Wemyss's near neighbour, with her lace mantilla about her fine head, and her chiselled conversation, puts me in mind of the great French ladies of the eighteenth century, of Madame du Deffand, of Madame de Sévigné. Her cottage overlooks a landscape Madox Brown might have painted, and to her windows come blackbirds, thrushes and nuthatches each day, to take food from her hand. She had originally put out a glove on a stick on to which the birds hopped; and when, after some weeks, she put out her own hand they fed from it as from the glove. Eliza charmed the birds as she charmed her friends.

Who, knowing Lady Wemyss, did not love her? Such grace of spirit as was hers seemed to me as perfect as the fabled beauty of a Helen, of an Isolde. In her presence one need not look back to history or legend; I could imagine no nature more exquisite. Life had not spared her; and she had learned charity, not only towards her own class. During her later years she suffered constant pain; but it made no wrinkle, no crow's feet in her spirit. It was her spirit which pervaded Stanway. Lovely as was Stanway itself, when she was absent there was a coldness within. I must have referred to this in a letter to her one summer, for she writes of a similar feeling in her reply.

Harestones,
Longniddry, N.B.
Sat. Sept. 22nd.

The
châtelaine
of Stanway

My dear Sir William,

I have received your nice letter—and am *quite delighted* at your having sent it to Elcho Castle and am also very glad that you tried Stanway as a second shot and it reached me safely here a day or two ago, but I have been rather rushed and very tired ever since I've been in Scotland, a series of sightseeing guests—charming but exhausting—and I *love* writing letters, especially answering such an inspiring and inspiring one as yours—only there is so much I might say in answer (and so little time in which to say it) that I must be niggardly circumspect—neither of which characteristics are really my nature! . . . I so agree with you—I have many vague theories on the subject, which I would gladly discuss with you—that houses lose their life—their souls—become empty shells, when those who love them, leave them—though faint perfume and tender memories cling to them and are recognized by the sensitive, if their (the houses) inmates loved them much, but if horrid or wicked people live in them, of course they become HAUNTED! Clouds, the house my father built in Wilts, is now an empty, deserted shell, but seems (to me) still to remember its days of sweetness and delight, and the radiance left by happy people who loved each other and their home—on the other hand, rooms are so sensitive that they seem to die when deserted for a day! and I am glad to think that you feel *I* should be there when *you* go to Stanley, but I do regret that you live at Stroud, while I have to be far away—and in the summer too, when long drives are pleasant, and you live in London when I am at Stanway—very *contrary* of you!!! But you must come again soon sometime, I did enjoy that lunch when Evan¹ was there, we had nice real talk—I forget what month that was in?

I came here in July and have had rather a strenuous time

¹ Sir Evan Charteris.

*The
châtelaine
of Stanway*

here and am tired. Please let me have your London address and tell me when you go there and never be at your Stroud country home without letting me know. I would much like to come and see you and your wife *there*.

I've not been in the surgeon's hands I am thankful to say. (Do I know Mrs Coombe Tennant, I'm not sure, tell me where she lives? Who is she?) I did go to a place in Sherwood Park, Clinic and Spa—in other words a nursing home—in July for ten days or so—kept by a doctor I've known for years, where I get *real rest*. I try and go about twice a year for a week or so—sets me up—for when at home here or Stanway, I love it but I find it hard ever to rest!!

The room I live in here was built by the carpenter—during the War—and is quite close to the sea and a lovely panorama view—Pentlands, Arthur's Seat, coast of Fife—and the sea, the golden sands, the lovely wild grey-green grass—Bents, the big house Gosford, is quite near and has been this summer used as a hotel.

I've had one or two guests who adore expeditions—Edith Wharton has just been here. She is a great traveller and 'intensive' sightseer. Had never set foot in Scotland before—she *did* Edinburgh—Gallery, Museums, Flower Show, thoroughly and the E. Lothian Gardens and we went all along Loch Tay and through the Pass of Glencoe, which is grand and lovely—that *is* haunted and combines strange contrasts, being beautiful as Heaven and grim as Hell! . . . grand and romantic beyond words. Well, now I must stop hawering, but I do like your having addressed your letter to a most romantic ruin—and I wonder if I was able to live there, and you helped me, whether we could make it come to life? . . . I'd like you to see it, it's on the banks of the Tay, Perthshire, and I imagine has not been inhabited since the 16th century. Near Peebles, on the Tweed, Neidpath, on my husband's property, is another romantic, stern, inhospitable tower, on a glorious bank with lovely trees overlooking a grand curve of the river. There lived the poor maid who pined for her lover, who went to the war, and grew so pale

and thin and plain, that when he returned on his noble charger and she looked out from her tower window and he didn't recognise her—I do not know what the modern girl would do, lipstick and rouge would perhaps have made matters alright, but the poor Maid of Neidpath had nothing to do but die of a broken heart (which she did). Scott (and I believe Campbell?) wrote ballads about her which I used to read in my youth.

Well, I must stop or you will cry 'Hold, enough!' Please remember me to your wife, for whom I have a feeling of *real* sympathy, also to yourself and I hope we shall meet soon, and do give me your London address and tell me when you go there. I know I could look it up but I have no books of reference and hate the Telephone Book so! It's raining and wind howling to-day.

Goodbye and A *Bientôt*. I hope to be here till end of October and to have a quiet bit here in Oct. before I go South.

Yours ever,

MARY WEMYSS.

Is this grace of presence and inner grace, this perfect tact, the beautiful consideration for others and quick, sympathetic intelligence a quality of age? or was there something, as I believe, about the older generation: did their securer position in a not yet disintegrated social world give them a finer poise than that of the women of a later time? I think of the houses I visited in earlier days, their subdued air, their quietness as one entered, and the small, intimate circle round the hostess presiding at a glittering tea-table, a circle that met habitually, the quiet talk round the fire. I do not like the sherry parties of to-day, where people, crushed together, shout into one another's faces, where little sausages are served on sticks, and one's hostess is as difficult to find as the proverbial needle in the bundle of hay.

No, I find myself happier in the country, where social life is carried on in a more leisurely way, and where houses

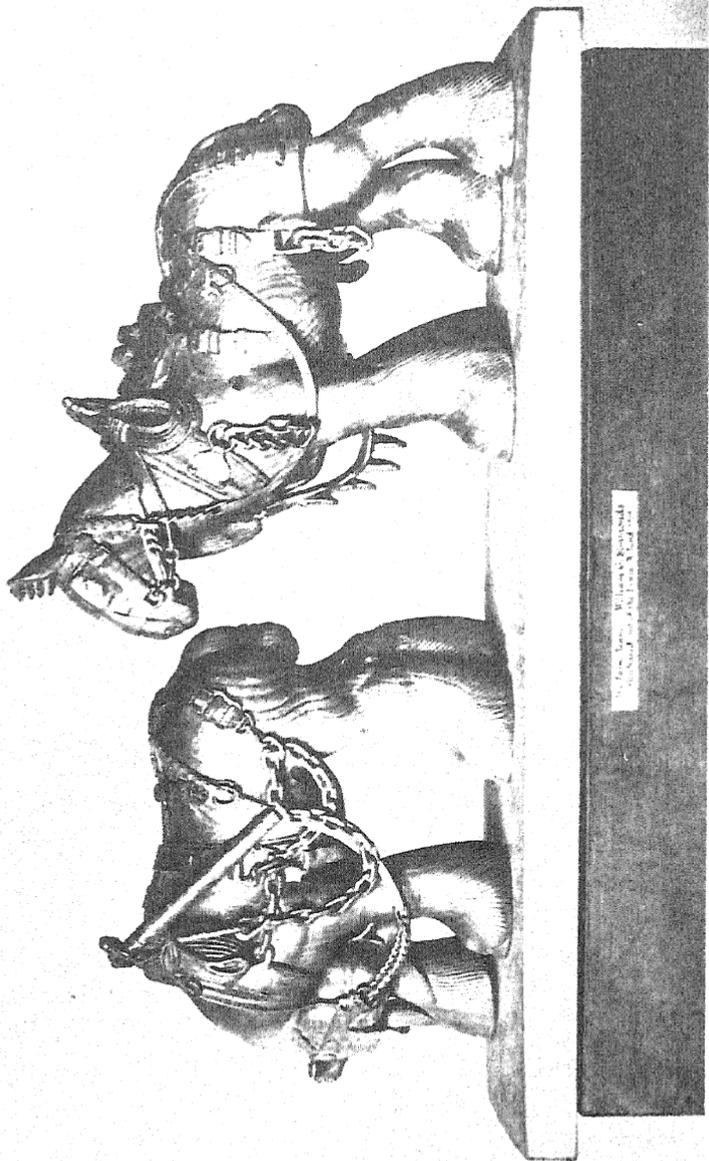
Clavichords and harpsichords

themselves have so much character. There is Nether Lypiatt, for example, a perfect specimen of a small eighteenth century manor house, with its great iron gateway and its flanking pavilions, where live Mr and Mrs Gordon Woodhouse, sharing it with Lord Barrington. Here are some of Arnold Dolmetsch's beautiful instruments, a harpsichord, a clavichord, and a no less perfect clavichord made by Tom Goff.

Tom Goff's clavichords and harpsichords are as carefully finished, I am told, as those of Dolmetsch. They are certainly lovely things to look at. I lately saw two small clavichords he had made for Mrs Gordon Woodhouse on which I heard her play. Listening to the delicate sounds, at times scarcely perceptible to the ear, it came on me how the whole fabric and tempo of life two centuries ago was on a smaller scale than ours. Our artists and musicians, our entertainers generally have to appeal to a grosser public, have themselves lost the more delicate faculties and the finer finish of craftsmanship. The piano, with its violent notes tuned to the heightened scale to which our senses have become accustomed, is the normal instrument of to-day. So Van Gogh and Gauguin set the standard for our connoisseurs. Our audiences being so much larger, the more powerful must be the voices to reach them.

To listen to Mrs Gordon Woodhouse playing on these clavichords is, even for me, a precious experience, not only to hear but to see; to watch her sensitive fingers range over the keys is itself a rare pleasure. While the sound of the piano drives me from any room, not so the harpsichord, the clavichord, the virginals, of which the silvery sounds, like whispered music, enchant my ear.

Mrs Gordon Woodhouse's taste in music is carried into all her possessions, her furniture, her books, china and pictures, and there, too, are some of William Simmonds' fine carvings, in wood and ivory. His two cart horses at the Tate, which during my trusteeship I proposed should be acquired, are among the most notable pieces of true sculpture there, and lately, another carving by him, of an old horse, was



THE FARM TEAM

bought under the terms of the Chantrey Bequest. The new sculpture gallery recently added, through the generosity of Lord Duveen, somewhat overwhelms by its height and weight the sculpture shown therein. It is well suited to sculpture of a larger monumental character, more often produced abroad than in England. I think some artists would prefer their works to be seen between less august, less palatial walls, under a more modest, more intimate roof. Doubtless Lord Duveen wished to provide a setting worthy of a great Empire. For a time at least it were better for artists to provide works suited to a more chastened, more humane world. We may well leave supergrandeur to the Power-States.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ENGLISH TEMPERAMENT

*Adieu to
George
Moore* **T**HERE came a letter from Blanche, telling of his undiminished pleasure in Dieppe as a painting ground, in which he referred also to George Moore's and Mary Hunter's death.

19, *Rue du Dr Blanche,*
Paris.

January 23rd, 1933.

My dear William Rothenstein,

During the autumn in Normandy I painted a lot of Dieppe pieces, boats on their return from the herring fishing season—a most magnificent display of subjects for the painter. I do believe there is something special in the light, the skies, the scenery of our old city that no artist could resist to try and render. As a matter of fact, Delacroix, as well as Corot, Boudin, Pissarro, Gauguin, up to the latest post-impressionists, have all been enthralled by Dieppe. But November, December, are *the* time. Bound as I was to go on errands every day to town for our invalids, my little profits were the sketching, noting, intensely observing the people busy around the front harbour. A very characteristic type of men and women, dressed as nowhere else—a black and pink-ochre mob. Do you know that our *Polletais* people (Sickert's well-beloved Titine was one of those) are supposed to come straight from a Venetian colony settled in Dieppe, in the 15th century. Apart from studies of such class, and still life pieces, I took up old, unfinished pictures of London, started twenty-five years ago. One in particular: a family of costers



W. R. 1925

JACQUES-EMILE BLANCHE

—the children in their funny attire—buttons—listening to a speech delivered by the Duchess of Somerset on the occasion of a *donkey show* prize competition. Over one hundred figures. I am told this is one of my best achievements—I wonder!

Then I repainted entirely my portrait of Maeterlinck, already hanging at Rouen, in the Musée. Neither the sitter nor I liked it; therefore, it was understood I would alter it. But nothing ever could have induced me to hope the re-building—on same canvas—of the figure (just as a sculptor would, by adding on small lumps of clay) would result into such an impressive, majestic presentment of my most difficult model. Had I not been taken ill, I might have gone soon over to London. Mrs Saxton Noble expected me; perhaps Marjorie Madan told you. There was some idea of my family having a show in the spring—a show of some of my English pieces.

At a twenty-four hours' distance I was pained with the news of my dear Mary Hunter's and of G. M.'s deaths. The former's dramatic end—almost too much the matter for a pathetic *shocker*. One of the belles of the Edwardian era. I had recently been telling a lot about Mrs Charles Hunter's *salon* to André Maurois, who is doing a 'Life of King Edward'. Mrs George Keppel was here, staying with her daughter, Violet Trefusis, my neighbour—next street. I was full of it, ready to pour out into Maurois' careful, watchful and safe ear much that I no longer could dream of making known in my own books. I have given up publishing memoirs. The last work I intend proposing to the attention of the public, are, nevertheless, memories, but not supposed to be *mine*. I shall stand as the editor of a man, just died—a certain Joséphin Perdrillon—whom I have often made speak, especially in two short books. Perdrillon, a former cavalry officer, very traditional, very Catholic, but shrewd, weak, poor, retires as a tutor in a ducal family and, year after year, after the war, goes down, fast and steep to communism—from discovering what society was. You can imagine the

A great lady amount of scenes this grants me chances of describing—30 years in all compartments of the French and cosmopolitan society—with accurate statements of political, literary, artistic events. In a humoristic, grotesque style of the sixties.

Now I must stop: writing does ache, I am half sitting, half standing, with burning, blazing shoulder, breast, neck.

Give my best compliments to your dear wife,

Ever yours affectionately,

J. E. BLANCHE.

I hope you are aware of André Gide's latest incarnation as a Bolshevik leader of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*?

Yes, I had heard of Gide's crossing over to the Communist party in France. Later, he was to bring dismay to the orthodox communists by his outspoken comments on conditions in Soviet Russia.

I gave Blanche a drawing of Gide, made during the War, while he was staying with us at Oakridge, together with one of Blanche himself, to be added to the collection he was making for the museum at Rouen. What energy Blanche had, to write two novels, in addition to his books on painting, while he was at work on innumerable portraits!

Chance had thrown me much in Mrs Hunter's company of late. I had known her for many years, as one knows people in London, but had never been of her circle. Fortune had dealt hardly with her. Her country house was sold, her palace in Venice given up, and she could no longer entertain as of old. Yet in her house there remained enough evidence of former affluence, Sargent and Mancini paintings, Venetian decorations, fine furniture, to allow of her forgetting her now straightened means.

But she was growing old. George Moore had hurt her deeply by telling her bluntly on the occasion of a visit she paid him, that he no longer wished to see old women. Now both are ageless. Ethel Smyth wrote of her sister, Mrs Hunter:

Dear Mr Rothenstein,

How extraordinarily nice of you writing to me—and such a letter! How she would have enjoyed reading it!—I think the most wonderful part was how she took her reverses and latterly her failing health. I never saw such gallantry—no one ever heard from her a word of complaint, or self pity—indeed of retrospect. She had evidently made up her mind to go straight on to the end. And she did. I have a queer feeling that as Napoleon said St Helena would serve the legend, so these last difficult years and her bearing throughout them have completed her legend. And, speaking for myself, I care about her more than ever before. . . . Well—Again *thank you for writing.*

Yours sincerely,

ETHEL SMYTH.

There is something poignant, awful, in the dignity which death brings to one in whom dignity has been wanting. It is apparent in the strange tranquillity of death masks. But up to the end there was to be something queer, a little ridiculous, connected with Moore. For when his ashes were taken, in a packing case, to be scattered over the lake at his old home, duty was demanded at the frontier; and when a cairn of stones was set up on the island, police had to guard it from the peasants, angry at the pagan rites. And when the casket containing the ashes was removed from the packing-case, the police had to chase after the paper and shavings blown about the cairn. My wife and I went to the service at the crematorium at Golder's Green. In the chapel were a few intimates, Steer, Tonks, Harrison, Evan Charteris, Henry Nevinson, the two last alone representing literature. Just before the service began I walked Ramsay MacDonald, accompanied by Augustus John, the latter in an overcoat with a huge check pattern. But no representatives of literary societies were present. I could not imagine this happening

*Improvisa-
tion and
repainting*

in France. Ramsay MacDonald was, at the time, being painted by John, giving, he told me, many sittings; and, some while before, John spoke of the difficulty he found in finishing anything. Alas, that we should have lost methods from which a man of genius could depart, as Goya or Delacroix could depart from the old ways. John's early portraits, with their powerful drawing and modelling, were done easily enough. To-day his paintings, done at a sitting, are masterly; but when he repaints he risks losing control; whereas Steer, knowing he will have to labour long and painfully, proceeds more tentatively. Steer's painting of Mrs Raines, his old housekeeper, in the Tate Gallery, is one of the distinguished portraits of our time.

I used to be annoyed when foolish flatterers, seeing Rodin's work in its early stages, would say to him, 'N'y touchez plus, c'est parfait;' whereas in John's studio, I want to carry off the lovely improvisations. How many promising beginnings do we all overload with repainting! Someone asked me about the permanence of modern pigments; I replied that paint is a permanent material; the greatest danger to paint is the painter!

We know little or nothing of the methods of the masters of portraiture: how Ingres, for instance, could work for years on a portrait, and yet preserve and perfect the purity of his form and the surface of his paint. I forget how many sittings Degas said Manet had given to his *Bon Bock*—a great number. Yet May Morris declared her father sat twice only for the splendid head Watts painted. I saw John's portrait of Suggia in an early stage; the drawing of the figure, of the extended arm, was exquisite. As Steer said, we muddle about. The *art* of painting has not advanced, but deteriorated. We need a period of constant experiment to regain mastery over our material.

At the Royal College of Art I tried, by demonstration before the students, to hint at logical method both of drawing and painting, only to find it consistently disregarded; yet for tennis, billiards, or cricket, the advice of professionals

is carefully followed. Acrobats and dancers obey their trainers. I read in the life of Nijinsky, how he and Pavlova practised their steps daily before the *maître de danse*, and were shouted at and abused if they showed the smallest fault. Why should painters alone disdain discipline?

It was useless to tell the students of the severe practice which Degas, whose name was constantly on their lips, had to endure; further, that Matisse and others of his generation went through strict academic training. Turner's careful early work led to the most daring adventure in his later years. Blake taught himself through painstaking engraving.

The students of the Design School were less stubborn, more amenable. For Tristram, who had worked under Lethaby, was able to encourage practice based on powerful medieval methods together with the contemporary outlook. I was glad to join in a tribute to Lethaby; this took the form of a book of his essays, to be printed in his honour. I was surprised that no publisher would risk printing such a book on its merits, for Lethaby was one of the sanest and wisest of writers on the arts. He was also himself a fine artist. After his death the Art Workers' Guild brought together a number of his water-colour drawings which came as a surprise to those who knew Lethaby only as architect and writer. I was anxious for some of these to be acquired for the Tate. 'There is a lovely drawing of trees and there are some adorable architectural drawings of Guildford clock and one of Arques church and town. Could you get 2, trees and architectural?' wrote MacColl, quick to see their beauty. For the drawings, which Lethaby, in his modesty, had never exhibited, were as fresh as Steer's, as sensitive as Ruskin's. I have ever admired architects' drawings, and those of artists trained to be architects. At the College of Art I encouraged the students who aimed to be painters to use the advantages offered by the architectural school there. Always attracted by buildings, I can never achieve the details which to architects offer no difficulties. And how fine the bare severity of architects' elevations can be! Contrariwise how unsatis-

An architect's drawings factory are the 'picturesque' elevations so overmuch in evidence in contemporary exhibitions. I remember my disappointment, after eagerly awaiting Lutyens' plans for his New Delhi, at the empty, washy drawings shown at the Royal Academy. What noble things a contemporary of Inigo Jones would have made of such elevations!

I was asked to speak on the subject of architects' drawings at the R.I.B.A., when I showed on the screen good and bad examples; the masterly drawings of the Renaissance architects looked superb; while some of the nineteenth century drawings, Pugin's 'Contrasts' among them, were excellent.

Lethaby, like Ruskin and Philip Webb before him, owed much to Pugin. Though by temperament they were wide apart, there was something in common between Pugin and Benjamin Haydon. Both men had more than a touch of genius, which was rarely apparent in their work. Yet Haydon's entertaining painting of the *Punch and Judy Show* at the Tate is a delightful picture, and contains painter-like passages which few contemporary painters could achieve. When he aimed at the sublime he failed. His autobiography, which Tom Taylor edited, can be read and reread. What happened to the journals themselves, from which Tom Taylor selected only the parts he thought fit for publication, is a mystery. Some say Taylor destroyed them; from others I have heard that they are still extant. Buxton Forman, writing on Keats, seemed to suggest he had had access to them; but when I enquired from him I had a somewhat vague reply. I thought perhaps Aldous Huxley, who wrote on Haydon and later edited an edition of the autobiography, might know something of the journals. From his letter I gathered it was not so:

6. 5. 33.

Dear Rothenstein,

Forgive the long delay—due to the fact that I have been travelling in Central America, looking at Maya and Toltec remains and, with even greater interest, at living Indians,

for several months, and have only just come back to accumulated correspondence.

*Pugin and
Haydon*

The Tom Taylor edition you speak of is the one with several facsimiles of the drawings—isn't it? Anyhow, I remember having read such an edition many years ago. Rather pathetically insensitive drawings, if one could judge by the reproductions. What has happened to the drawings now, I don't know. I made a good many enquiries at the time but could find out incredibly little, even about the big paintings. There are two fearful horrors in the cellars of the Victoria and Albert, and I believe Christ's 'Entry' is in Cincinatti. But I could find no trace of anything else—tho' I admit I didn't push the investigation at all far. (Even the indefatigable Sir R. Witt had very few photos of the pictures or drawings.)

Yours,

ALDOUS HUXLEY.

Haydon, enthusiastic, ambitious, full of big ideas, became a sponger on his friends (he borrowed from Keats and when Keats needed money would not repay him) and finally committed suicide. Yet he had vision; his lectures, afterwards published, advocating a more intelligent public patronage of the arts, have a note of passion and conviction. G. F. Watts, with a more solid talent and a stronger character, achieved that which Haydon attempted. Yet even Watts, for all his fame and success, carried out but one mural decoration, that in Lincoln's Inn Hall. His offer to paint one in the Hall of Euston Station was refused. Alfred Stevens, a greater man altogether than Haydon, was likewise cold shouldered and neglected. I was recently in Manchester and again saw Madox Brown's paintings in the Town Hall there, to find these no less striking than when I first saw them. It is surely absurd to ignore or condemn the men associated with the Praeraphaelite movement as though they had a common aim and were all unpainterlike. Like the French impressionists, they were individuals, some more gifted than others.

*The
English
genius*

Madox Brown stood apart, a character, and a peculiarly English one. He had something in common with Hogarth, with Borrow and Doughty, a something rough, insular and stubborn, a racial savour which links early Britain with modern England. Even more peculiarly insular was William Blake, so insular that his genius has been little understood abroad.

I remember being chid by Laurence Binyon when, in a little book on Goya which I wrote at his request for a series he was editing—this was in 1896—I spoke slightly of Blake as an artist. I was soon of another mind about his genius, and was surprised to find Ricketts somewhat cool over Blake's compositions. In my Romanes lecture at Oxford I referred to Blake as 'an artist whose daring conceptions astonish as do Turner's. It was, until lately, said of Blake that he could not draw; that his art is more akin to literature than to painting; that he was not, indeed, an artist at all. Now in his late illustrations to Dante especially he is seen as an avatar, a great forerunner of a later day, when virtue lies not in the eye, we are told, but in the subconscious self. Blake by no means lacked a sense of form. On the contrary, he invented extravagantly original forms of his own, based, as is often the case with English artists, in part upon the work of other painters, in part on his own extraordinary vision. Content inevitably creates its own form. Blake's forms were dictated by his own burning mind. They are swift and dynamic, as though rejected by the explosive force of his inner ecstasy, light and graceful when his mood is lyrical, terrible in their power when his spirit is wrapped in the prophet's mantle. Blake with no sense of form! Blake who conceived a whole mythology and invented shapes solid enough to contain the dynamic pressure of his passionate mental creations!'

Binyon has a just appreciation of Blake; also of his followers, Linnell, Calvert and Palmer. At the exhibition of English Art to which Binyon refers in his letter was a masterly drawing, a self portrait, by Palmer, whom I had hitherto known only as a poetical painter of landscape.

When Binyon retired from the Print Room at the British Museum his friends gave him a drawing by Turner as a token of their affection. On his way to lecture in America he wrote:

*The
English
genius*

*On Board the Cunard R.M.S. Scythia,
5th October, 1933.*

I was quite dazzled with the Turner drawing which was presented me just before leaving and which you and other old friends have conspired to give me. I am deeply touched and very proud when I think of those friends, to all of whom I owe much already. The lovely Turner will be my most precious possession: and I feel I shall like it more and more. I want to thank you too for the things presented to the Museum in my name—you are too good to me altogether! We are having a marvellously smooth passage, and are expected to arrive in Boston long before we are due—unless the fog comes down. It has been a fearful rush and drive these last months. We were both dead beat before starting, and Cicely simply collapsed as soon as we got on board and there was nothing to do or to plan: however she is getting rested by degrees.

We expect to enjoy Harvard but long to be back in our cottage. I am terribly sorry to miss the English Exhibition at the R.A. I do hope it will be good. It's extraordinary how difficult it often is to find out where things are. Early Rossettis, for instance; no one seems to know.

We shall look forward to seeing you at Westridge one day soon after we come back in May. And meanwhile of course I should love to hear your news if you ever have time to send a line.

Affectionately and gratefully yours,

LAURENCE BINYON.

Our love to you both.

There were some good early Rossettis at the Exhibition of British Art at Burlington House; but too large a place was taken by portraiture, and insufficient representation given

*English
pictures in
Paris*

to the imaginative and poetical aspect of English figure painting. Again, when a collection of English paintings was sent, at the invitation of the French Government, to be shown at the Louvre, there was an over-emphasis on portraits. French painting, in structure, quality and design, in the interpretation of the visible world, is admittedly superior to English objective painting. The more reason for concentrating on that which is peculiar to the English temperament. I remember Degas saying, before a Daumier hanging in his apartment, 'If Raphael could see a Gêrome, he would say, "connu", but before a Daumier, "tiens, c'est intéressant, ça."' So I can imagine Degas saying 'connu' to an English post-Cézanne canvas, but before a Stanley Spencer, 'tiens, c'est amusant, ça.' When, shortly after the English exhibition at the Louvre, the New English Art Club sent over to Paris a collection of members' works, surprise was shown at the quality of English contemporary painting. My friend and pupil Francis Tailleux told me that the surrealist painters had been looking forward to seeing the work of Burne-Jones especially among the English pictures at the Louvre, and were disappointed to find so poor a selection. Joseph Southall told me, too, that his tempera paintings are appreciated in France, more than in England.

I have a great respect for Southall, both as an artist and a sterling character, one of the few considerable artists who has remained in his native city; Ernest Sichel at Bradford is another. I doubt whether there are many in Birmingham who appreciate the fine qualities of Southall's paintings. He offered to design a great civic decoration for the City Hall, but the offer was coldly received. During 1933, an exhibition of his work was organized by the Birmingham Society of Artists, for which he asked me to write a foreword. This I was delighted to do. He wrote gratefully of the success of the venture:

My dear William,

Thanks for your last note and good wishes. The result of your powerful championship seems wonderful. There is

actually hope for a great scheme of mural decoration. But of this I must report later.

*A good
Provincial*

We had a great crowd at the Private View and John D. blew a good loud blast to my trumpet—Holden backed up and Granville Bantock spoke. Thus the concert became:

First Trumpet—Sir Wm. Rothenstein.

Second Trumpet—John Drinkwater.

Accompanist—Sir Granville Bantock.

Collection (i.e. Sales)—very good.

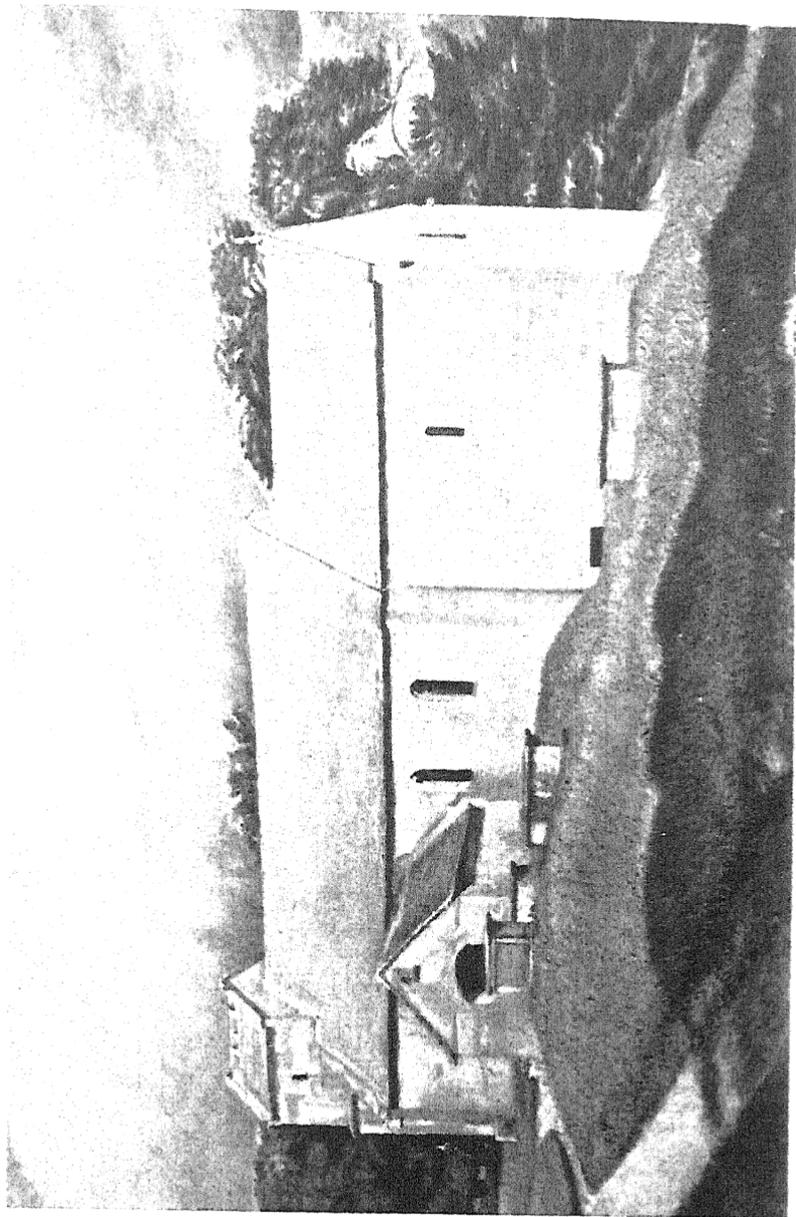
I send you a few local cuttings,* also my love and eternal gratitude.

JOSEPH S.

* But *The Observer* is the best.

I have referred more than once to the need of subject matter common to artist and those among whom he lives, of the weakening of local life through the gravitation of the more actively creative men from the large and small towns to the capital. Only when success has been won in London is notice taken by the local bigwigs, and even then this is rather a matter of local vanity, and does not extend to practical use of an artist's gifts. Still more disregarded are the humbler country craftsmen. The country magnates go to the London stores, to the dealers in 'antiques' and the sale rooms for their furniture, to the final impoverishment of local life. One hears much talk to-day of the need to tempt men back to the land; but it must be remembered that agriculture was by no means the sole rural industry. The small and large country houses were built by the village stone masons or bricklayers, and the timber and iron work, in many cases even the furniture, was the work of the local cabinet maker, carpenter and blacksmith. To get something approaching normal life in our villages the local craftsmen must again be encouraged, employed and well paid. So much money is wasted by wealthy people; but they are strict economists in paying for the humbler forms of service. The talent is there to be developed, as those who employ it know well.

*New
village
cottages* A hopeful sign in our own parish is the move among the young married men to build cottages for themselves, with the help of their neighbours out of working hours, cottages with ample light, indoor sanitation, garages, even with the latest gadgets. If the cottages are less picturesque than the older ones they are at least built with sound material, which cannot be said of all the Council cottages. Too much stress is laid by committees of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England on a merely negative quality, a superficial appearance not discordant with that of the older local buildings. It is too often forgotten that old cottages were once new, their walls and roofs straight and square, those built of stone invariably colour-washed white, pink, or blue, the mullions coloured or whitened. Cobbett in his *Rural Rides* speaks of the yellowish stone of the Cotswold quarries which was thus treated when used on buildings.



CHURCH AT DUNTISBOURNE ROUSE

CHAPTER XXII

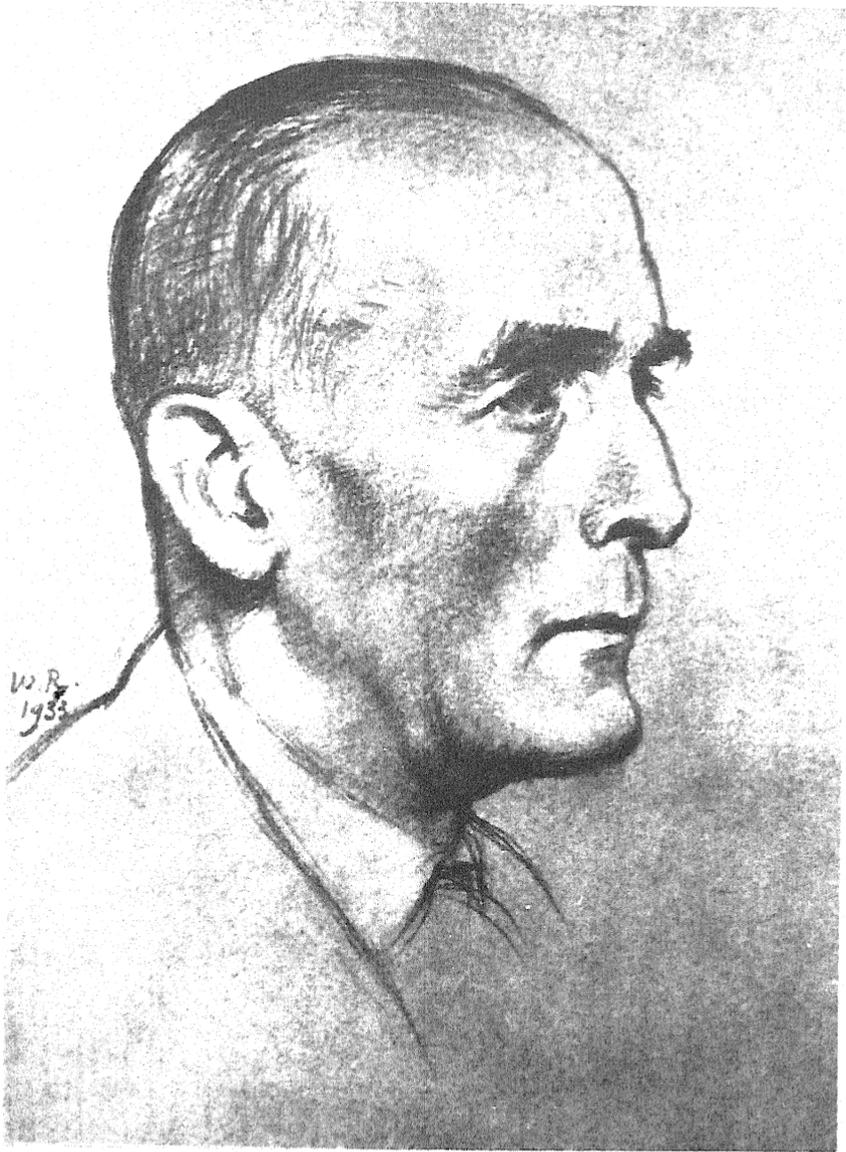
AN ESCAPE FROM GERMANY

THE last time I went to Nauheim, during the summer of 1933, I had my first experience of flying, going by Imperial Airways from Croydon to Frankfurt. Looking down from the plane, I realized how great cities, abandoned and falling into ruin, could be buried and show barely a trace of their former site. 'I am glad you have had the experience of flying. It is very moving and the more I fly the more I like it. It does enable you to put the earth and all that it contains in a new relationship to one,' so wrote Ramsay MacDonald. He would always fly to Lossiemouth when he could; and looking out on the glorious 'cloudscape' lighted up by the sun, I could understand his enthusiasm for the air. *Visits to a Kurort*

The dullness of a Kurort was relieved for me by the kindness of friends who took me in their cars through the countryside. I have seen no richer country; on every hand the fields stretch golden to the horizon. It was strange to hear the Germans pleading poverty when surrounded by such wealth. At harvest time the fields were alive with peasant families, busy until sunset. Most of the reaping was done by hand, by women as well as by men—I was put in mind of Breughel's paintings. In the evening came a procession of the long, railed, two-horsed waggons, little changed since Dürer's time, heavily laden, on which sat bronzed men, wearing bright green shirts, women and young girls, their heads bound with kerchiefs, returning to the villages. Each house in the village street had its barn and byre, the waggons

*A memory
of Köpen-
nick*

entering through great gateways, curiously carved. From Nauheim, since its situation is somewhat lowering, patients are usually sent for an after-cure to a more exhilarating climate. Freudenstadt in the Black Forest was recommended to us, and to Freudenstadt we went. Arrived at the hotel, we asked for a modest room, and after entering our names in the register, we were surprised when the proprietor came deferentially forward and insisted against our protests upon giving us two of the best rooms. Before he withdrew he informed us that the Bürgermeister would have the honour of calling upon us. The Bürgermeister? But there must be some mistake, some confusion of name or identity! But no, he assured us, we were expected; it was upon us the Bürgermeister would call, and true enough, soon after a card was sent up—the Bürgermeister was waiting downstairs. It was an absurd situation—I remembered the Captain of Köpenick—but the mistake would surely be explained. Then we found that Gerhart Hauptmann, hearing we were to come to Freudenstadt, had telegraphed to the Bürgermeister telling him we must be received with all honour! Dear Hauptmann! how like his impulsive generous nature! The last time I passed through German villages their charm was spoiled for me by posters inciting the people against the Jews, asserting that a Jewish schoolmaster had violated some hundred Aryan virgins. But even then the cruel and cowardly treatment to which Germans of Jewish ancestry were to be subjected did not enter my mind. That no voice has been raised by 'Aryan' Germans against the persecution of their fellow-citizens is a stain on German honour, which it will take long to cleanse. But it was not only the Jews who were persecuted. My friend Harry Kessler arrived at our house one day early in 1933, pale and exhausted. Kessler had fought on the Russian front during the early part of the war. Then he had been appointed Minister to Poland, a dangerous office, he told us. After the war he worked incessantly to promote a better understanding between Germany and the Allies. But he had written a life of Rathenau—that could not be forgiven him by the Nazis!



COUNT HARRY KESSLER

One morning he was warned that he was to be arrested during the day, but managed to escape, leaving behind him everything he owned.

*Exiles
from
Germany*

I heard from another German friend who got away to France not long after Kessler reached England, who had a like experience.

'Dear Rothenstein,' he wrote to me, 'I should like to tell you how indignant I am at the abominable way the Nazis are behaving to the Jews; it is with real shame I have to acknowledge them as my countrymen. All I can say is that they hurt us, who are not Jews, but merely democrats and intellectuals, no better. I myself have had to leave the country, after the elections, because I had sudden but trustworthy warning that I risked assassination if I stayed. And a great many of my friends are in the same case. There is *no* justice or protection of any sort for those who are not on the Nazi side. This, the fact of the law being practically abolished, makes the persecution in Germany worse than it ever was in Russia or Italy. The only hope is in this government of madmen and criminals, who do not represent Germany or even the better class of their followers, being overthrown as soon as possible. In the meanwhile I and my friends are exiled. I shall stay in France for some time, and then see whether I settle here or in Switzerland. I felt I had to write to you as you were so helpful in overcoming the world feeling against Germany after the War and seeing all that was done with your and other broadminded people's help since then destroyed by a band of gangsters. The great mass of the German people are what they are; it is a terrible delusion which is leading them astray. I personally suffer most from the feeling Hitler and his men are leading Germany to destruction. Of course I write this *for you personally*; it would be fatal and might cost me my life, if my name was mentioned in connection with these views.'

This was in 1933. The years following only too fully bore out these tragic reflections. But one could not even then anticipate the crimes the Nazis were to commit, the treacherous

*Cheerless
unemploy-
ment
bureaux*

policy they were to pursue. During the war I doubted stories of base treatment of British prisoners at the hands of German officers; now such stories seem less incredible.

That there is much to admire in Nazi-Germany goes without saying. The conquest of unemployment, the initiation of 'the Strength through Joy' for workers, the great roads, the generous provision of public buildings of every kind, command general admiration.

Alan Barlow,¹ then at the Ministry of Labour, was impressed during a visit to Germany by the cheerfulness of the unemployment bureaux, and on his return, wanted something done to brighten our London ones, dreary places with nothing to engage the attention of men waiting their turn, and asked for my help. He took me to two or three unemployment centres in the neighbourhood of the docks. Dull indeed they were. The first thing would be to paint the cheerless interiors with bright colours; afterwards an experiment might be made with mural paints in one of the centres. There would be no difficulty in getting some of the College students to give their services, provided their out-of-pocket expenses were paid. Despite Alan Barlow's initiative, the Ministry of Labour refused the small grant needed. Some time later, speaking at the Working Men's College on the regrettable separation between artists and public, and a need for a subject matter of general interest, I referred to this disappointing experience. A reference in the press to my talk led to a question being asked in the House of Commons whether my statement regarding the Ministry of Labour was correct. Sir Henry Betterton, then Minister of Labour, denied any knowledge of the matter. Next day, lunching with Lady Oxford, I found Sir Henry Betterton to be of the party. Talking with him after the luncheon, I thought it right to tell him of Alan Barlow's approach to me. Of this he knew nothing when he answered the question in the House, and he asked me to send him a minute to the Ministry. This I did. In replying he explained that while he sym-

¹ Now Sir Alan Barlow.

pathised with the views I expressed, from the enquiries he had made at the Office of Works 'the Treasury do not encourage much hope that sanction could be obtained for the provision out of public funds of the necessary expenses which you contemplated would have to be met'.

*Approach
to a
Ministry*

Nevertheless, through the goodwill of Sir Francis Flood, then Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Labour, a grant of £50 was finally sanctioned. For this sum four panels were painted over the entrance doors to the men's waiting room by Robert Baker, at the Camberwell Employment Exchange, with scenes representing the countryside, athletic games, and a group of musicians at the Working Men's College. These paintings are easy to read and are at the same time ingeniously composed.

There is among some of our younger artists a natural impulse towards this illustrative painting. I wish that the weekly journals which stand for a progressive social policy, would give more support to such fruitful enterprise. I tried too to raise a small sum towards the decoration of a women's Employment Exchange for which some girl students volunteered. To this end, knowing her gallant and vivacious spirit, I appealed for help to Lady Astor. She was then much beset, but wrote that Lady Cholmondeley was interested and would take her place. I went to see Lady Cholmondeley, explained what was to be done in a men's waiting room, that I wanted forty or fifty pounds to pay for similar mural paintings at a women's unemployment bureau. She asked me to put the details of the proposal in writing; but nothing came of the project.

Later, in 1935, Dr Spencer, the headmaster of a secondary school at Brockley, some eight miles out of London, asked my help to get some mural paintings done for the school hall. I consulted Cyril Mahoney, in charge of the composition class at the Royal College, who had carried out the fine painting in the concert room at Morley College. He at once offered to take on the work in co-operation with one of his most gifted students, Miss Evelyn Dunbar. She and Mahoney

*Mural
paintings
at Brockley*

set to work to prepare designs. For three years they worked on the wall paintings, among the best, to my mind, conceived since Madox Brown's wall paintings at Manchester. Two good designs were also made and carried out by Miss Eldridge and Miss Martin, also students at the College. Oliver Stanley, then President of the Board of Education, at whose house in the north Edward Payne was also executing some charming wall decorations, came to Brockley and spoke warmly in favour of the paintings when he handed them over formally to the care of the London County Council, but without effect. I had already appealed to the Education Committee of the London County Council, and to other public bodies for reasonable remuneration to be made to the artists. The London County Council, it is true, had contributed towards the out-of-pocket expenses incurred. But the major sum was paid for by the profits, over many years, from the school dinners. Finally, through a further sum from school concerts, augmented by contributions from the governors and staff, £100 was given to Evelyn Dunbar. This sum helped to repay the loan she received from the Kent County Council to enable her to study at the Royal College of Art, while a part of it she shared with Miss Eldridge and Miss Martin. Mahoney, for his three years' work, was given £25 and a silver cigarette case. It is much to the credit of the Brockley authorities (and Dr Spencer in particular) that they should willingly spend as much money as would buy a good sporting rifle for such a purpose. 'If only other far richer authorities would do as much!' wrote Mahoney.

Unfortunately Brockley is some eight miles from the centre of London, and these fine paintings remain unknown and unvisited. It is lamentable that such gifted painters as Cyril Mahoney and Evelyn Dunbar should be unused. Our economics are unsound; such neglect is unpolitic economy. What an outcry there would be, and rightly, if I went to the British Museum and smashed a Grecian marble; but no one is scandalized when the spirit of promising artists is broken,

and the nobler gifts become dependent on the caprice and diminishing chances of private patronage. Even two centuries ago, Horace Walpole observed: 'Until we have other pictures than portraits, and painting has ampler fields to range in than private apartments, it is in vain to expect that art should recover its genuine lustre.' It is amusing to find him hopeful that 'Whitfield's temples' should 'superadd the witchery of painting to that of music'. Knowing what we do of nonconformist tabernacles, we can scarcely wonder that Walpole's hope never ripened!

CHAPTER XXIII
PRAERAPHAELITE PAINTINGS AT THE
OXFORD UNION

*Changes at
Oxford* IT is one of the pleasures of Oxford that, once one is within the college precincts, the insecurity of life, the perilous social cleavages are forgotten; for the moment one belongs to a stable social structure. Ancient buildings, venerable trees, smooth lawns, well-tended gardens give a sense of leisured security, of an ideal past, of an illusory, sheltered present. So, archaic language gives the illusion of an archaic existence. But even since I first knew Oxford, great changes have come about, not least that of undergraduates walking with their girl friends in the streets and college precincts, even dining with them at the Union; and Communism has become a fashionable doctrine among both sexes. The dons no longer appear the leisurely scholars I used to know, but as men hurried and harassed with affairs. To walk in the High or the Cornmarket is like walking in Oxford Street in London; not now would the Duke of Dorset¹ stroll leisurely to the Christchurch meadows. Happily the country beyond Oxford is unspoiled; perhaps because it is too low-lying for healthy habitation. On our way from London to Gloucestershire, leaving Oxford, we drive through some forty miles of lovely pastoral country by Witney, and then, skirting Minster Lovell and Burford we take to country lanes, through Bibury and Barnsley, two of the loveliest villages in the county, into Cirencester and past Sapperton under hanging beech woods across the Golden Valley to Oakridge.

¹ The Duke of Dorset, in Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson*.

During 1934 I was invited by the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University to give the Romanes Lecture; an unexpected distinction; further, it was intimated that an honorary degree, that of Litt.D., was to be conferred upon me. Lest my head be turned by this double honour, I bethought me of Walter Raleigh's saying that doctorates are given daily to men 'who would never have got to be shop walkers if they had been drapers' assistants'. The conferring of the doctorate being previous to the encaenia, I walked alone, robed in bright scarlet and grey, by the side of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Lys, preceded by a beadle bearing a mace, from Worcester College to the Sheldonian Theatre. Arrived there, I was conducted to the Old Divinity School, from whence I was called up, and stood, a small and lonely figure, before the Vice-Chancellor, to receive my doctorate, while the Public Orator, Cyril Bailey, read an oration in Latin. I then proceeded to give my lecture upon English Painting.

*Romanes
lecturer*

Next day I went to see the Praeraphaelite paintings at the Union. (I remembered Tristram saying, 'If you are in Oxford have a look at the Union wall-paintings.') I was shocked to find how they had darkened since I saw them forty years earlier; they were now almost invisible. Going upstairs to the balcony to get a closer view, I procured a ladder, whereby I was able to look closely into one of the paintings. It was dark with grime; there were signs of damp, and in places the paint had come away. None the less I was convinced if the dirt could be removed some of the work could be recovered, though Sir Charles Holmes, who had previously examined the paintings, believed them to be beyond recovery. Knowing what Tristram could do for wall-paintings, I wrote to Gilbert Murray, one of the Trustees of the Union, to suggest that Tristram be asked to report on their condition. The Trustees were sympathetic, Tristram was invited to Oxford; we examined the paintings together, Tristram's opinion coincided with mine: much of the work could be saved. There was the Morris roof painting, too, now dingy with smoke and dirt; after cleaning a small portion Tristram found a

*Prae-
raphaelite
paintings
at the
Union*

strong black pattern painted on a white ground. We discussed the method of raising funds with Herbert Fisher. Hearing that cleaning and fixing the paintings would cost no more than £500, he declared that a single ex-President of the Union could make himself responsible for the work. Fisher was over-sanguine; an appeal was published in *The Times*, but no ex-President of the Union came forward, while from old and present Oxonians there came but a faint response. This indifference was unexpected. I was told that the Union was unpopular; nevertheless, I could not but believe that the prospect of the partial recovery of these paintings, done by a band of young men under the powerful inspiration of Dante Rossetti, and heralding a new flowering of art and poetry, would appeal to Oxford men.

It was during a visit of Rossetti and Morris to Oxford in 1857 that Rossetti conceived the idea of painting the walls of the Union, then newly built. First Rossetti, Morris and Burne-Jones got to work; then Arthur Hughes, Hungerford Pollen, Spencer Stanhope, Val Prinsep, Rivière¹ and Alexander Munro the sculptor joined them. When Prinsep was doubtful of his capacity for the work, Rossetti said, 'Nonsense, there's a man I know who has never painted anything—his name is Morris—he has undertaken one of the panels and he will do something very good you may depend—so you had better come!' No wonder Whistler looked on Rossetti and his friends as amateurs! And what difficulties faced the painters! The mortar in the walls was scarcely dry; the brick surface was rough and without plaster, so that the uneven joints of the bricks showed through the paintings. Rossetti made a noble design for his subject, *Lancelot's dream of the San Graal*, and though never completed, Burne-Jones thought it represented the highest character of his work.

The Union Trustees provided for the experimental treatment of one of the paintings. When the dirt was removed and the surface fixed and waxed, most of the original painting

¹ William Rivière was not one of the original group who volunteered, but was called in later to fill three vacant panels.

reappeared. Thereupon a pamphlet was printed, showing the state of this painting before and after cleaning. Hugh Molson undertook the propaganda and acted as honorary secretary and treasurer. John Masefield and Arthur Hind wrote to support the project in *The Times*. Small sums began to dribble in. Insufficient though these were, Tristram nevertheless sent his assistant to clean the adjacent paintings. Rossetti's noble design of the Graal, though it had suffered much from damp and neglect, reappeared; indeed, all the paintings on the east wall proved to be in fair condition. Those by Morris and Burne-Jones on the west wall showed more serious effects from damp, and though much of the colour remained, the designs were in large part obliterated. We cannot, therefore, judge this venture by 'the man who had never painted anything before'. None the less, when all the paintings had been cleaned, the walls glowed again with strong, rich colour. A gallant experiment was once more apparent. Finally, through a contribution by the Union itself, the Morris roof painting was cleaned and reappeared in something like its original condition.

May Morris was happy to know that this early master-painting by her father was again visible. 'My dear William,' she wrote, 'I am so delighted to hear that the painted roof is clean and shining. It is all due to your efforts and we should be very grateful.' Yet I doubt whether those who frequent the Union library look up at the Morris roof painting or whether, indeed, any but a few strangers come to look at these paintings by Rossetti and his friends. Amateurish work, certainly; but a notable and gallant achievement.

I was surprised to find how completely Morris was himself at this early age; he was but twenty-three when he painted the roof, yet already the kind of design we associate with Morris was thoroughly worked out, not on the roof only, but on the supporting wood work.

I was glad to have had a share in restoring to Oxford this romantic inheritance. It was always supposed that the Union

*A Hellenic
cruise* paintings were done in a kind of tempera; but they appear to have been painted with oil colours on a thin coating of lime laid on to the brick surface. This accounts for their survival under the secretion of dirt and damp, impossible had they been painted in tempera. Maybe it was the faint interest that the Union paintings awakened that inspired Balliol to give Gilbert Spencer the task of painting the history of its founder at Holywell. There he executed a delightful series of wall paintings, which carry on the Praeraphaelite impulse to our time, in the idiom of our own speech.

I sent a copy of my Romanes lecture to Gordon Bottomley, who acknowledged it in one of his charming letters:

*The Sheiling,
Silverdale,
Carnforth.
4th June, 1934.*

My dear Rothenstein,

Thank you and thank you for the great pleasures you gave me last week. First in the welcome, acceptable news that an artist—and you the artist—is this year's Romanes lecturer: my wife and I have been out of England lately, and had missed the announcements of it. And, second, in the knowledge that you have had me in mind on so memorable an occasion, and among so many calls on your hours and attention: I am happy in your lecture, and seven times happy in the inscription you have put into it.

I value what you have said for its central burden most of all—'In the confusion of daily life a part of our nature is unfulfilled' taken together with 'a freedom unnatural to the artist's calling' and 'creative minds, unharnessed, follow after strange gods'. There's the truth: we all need harnessing. Little Spencer once said to me, 'The trouble with us, Bottomley, is that we haven't got a religion to paint.' You help us on the way to one.

And, by the way, I welcomed and rejoiced in your praise

of the Spencers, who have long been a joy to me—even when, with Stanley, I get his purpose more fully from the cartoon than the finished painting. *A Hellenic cruise*

Since you have heard of us we have—in a tame, staid, elderly style—been on a great adventure. A modified, hobbling, diluted Great Adventure, you know—but still, considering our age and our usual unenterprising habits, quite a splash for us. We went on the Hellenic Travellers' Club's April cruise—putting our noses in at Palermo and the enchanting island of Rhodes and the indescribable vileness of Constantinople; and then, after we had left the ship at Naples, taking a look at Rome and Venice.

The trouble about these affairs is that one hasn't long enough anywhere; and, as long compulsion has put me permanently into bottom gear, I could never get in even the modicum of Desideria that the time allowed. Still, we did verily see Athens, Byzantium, Rome, and closely enough to each other to make the juxtaposition vivid.

I shall have to go back to Constantinople, too, to see the Holy Wisdom again before I die: that marvel was even worth the not-light price I had to pay for it and which I should face again reluctantly: the dust of the foul town that contains it made mischief in my ancient lung, and I have had quite a little fight with it.

The time allowance was most inadequate of all in Greece: but the leisurely marine progression from place to place had its charm. One woke in the dawn to find the boat in (say) the Gulf of Corinth, berthing at a little town: inaccessible crags rose behind it: nearly at the top of the highest one was an undeniable village, and a snow-mountain looking over from behind. Someone (I think it was the Dean of Durham) came up behind me and said 'The village is Delphi: the mountain Parnassus'. We drove up those heights, and the two eagles of Zeus came out to meet us. We drove over the dreary plain where Agamemnon haled Cassandra home and saw where the watchman waited for the signal-fires; and where Clytemnestra's corpse lay for a thousand years with

*Memories
of travel*

a gold mask and covered with gold-covered clothes. AND we saw the deep waves of wild flowers that submerge Marathon in the spring. And that was, so to speak, the beginning; but if I take another sheet this letter will be delayed too long. Please share our great regard with Lady Rothenstein.

Your affectionate,

GORDON BOTTOMLEY.

Bottomley's letter made me more than ever regret chances missed of visiting Greece. Some years ago a party from the Art Workers' Guild made a pilgrimage there, and later Sir Henry Lunn invited me, on the condition of giving a single lecture, to join one of the Hellenic cruises. My eldest daughter went under the care of the Dean of St Paul's and Mrs Inge. Her account, too, made me long to see Delphi and Mount Parnassus. But, during my later years I have become more than ever a doorstep painter. When I can get away from portrait work in London, there are numbers of uncompleted canvases awaiting the season, spring, summer, autumn and winter, in which they were commenced. A painting or a drawing commissioned, often prevents my taking advantage of an effect long awaited, a cause of inner anguish, and the stacks of unfinished canvases grow more bulky with the years. So the old pleasure of wandering in foreign towns and villages is no longer mine. I cherish memories of earlier days in France, Spain and Italy, Morocco and India; and the autumn landscape at home reminds me of an autumn, superb in its red and gold, spent in the Adirondacks.

I was kept in touch with America through my friendship with John Jay Chapman, generous in sending his books as they were published. I came on a book about D. H. Lawrence in New Mexico by Mabel Dodge Luhan. The writing had a directness and vitality which reminded me of Mabel Dodge herself, whom I met during the latter part of my stay in New York. She asked me to make a drawing of her head and gave me some pleasant days in New York and at her home in Buffalo. She wrote from Taos:

Dear William Rothenstein,

*A message
from Taos*

It was a lovely surprise to get your letter yesterday! I remember so well taking you about and horrifying you with the picture of the Bowery with its elevated trains and our little French city hall with the tall Woolworth Building across! So much has happened since those days I won't start telling—I will only say I have been in this out-of-the-world, away-from-railroad place since 1916 and I am unable now to be content in the world! It is so beautiful here. You might somehow come here some day (Brett lives here, Frida Lawrence is on her ranch, people do come from far away) and if you could manage it I would love to show you things here awfully and grandly different from sights in New York.

I am glad you like my book. I am impelled to send you my new this year's book, because you liked the first one. This latter I didn't mean to publish and am not publishing the eight others of which it is only a fragment, but the publisher tempted me and I did fall and am now sorry. They were meant to be posthumous! Write again some time—

With my best of wishes,

MABEL DODGE LUHAN.

I read the book of memoirs to which the letter refers; again I was struck with her descriptive powers. When the eight further volumes appear they may cause some long dead to turn uneasily in their graves; but they will imprint some vivid portraits on the minds of the living.

This year, 1934, was the centenary of William Morris's birth, when Eric Maclagan got together a remarkable collection of his work at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Mr Baldwin presided and recounted his early recollection of his Praeraphaelite relations. There were other celebrations; and it fell to me to unveil a memorial at Walthamstow, on the site of the house wherein Morris was born, now occupied by a fire station. The fireman in charge showed us, with pride, his engine, all shining brass and red paint. Presently came

the Mayor of Walthamstow, the librarian from the house in which the Morris family afterwards lived (now, with the garden, public property), and various friends and admirers of William Morris. An inscribed tablet was set into the outside wall of the fire-station, veiled by a curtain. I spoke a few words, pulled the cord which drew back the curtain, when the inscription was laid bare. A queer place for a memorial tablet! Yet Morris would not, I felt, have disapproved of this connection with a gallant and humane service, nor of the fine figures of the firemen, with their belted axes and their bright, classical brass helmets. Later these helmets were exchanged for headgear of more sober shape and material. Incidentally it fell to Reid Dick and myself, while serving on the Royal Fine Art Commission, to decide the shape and colour of the new helmets.

May Morris had been collecting money for a village hall in memory of her father, at Kelmscott, where she herself still lives;¹ keeping the beautiful manor house, with the pictures, furniture and books, as it was in her father's time when he shared it with Rossetti. It was a great day for Kelmscott when the village hall was opened. When we arrived the hall was filled with villagers; Bernard Shaw was there to preside, and there came, too, the Mackails, Emery Walker, Morris's faithful friend, Herbert and Lettice Fisher, T. W. Powys, Alfred Powell, and, just after Shaw had spoken, Ramsay MacDonald, who beset though he was (for he was then Prime Minister) snatched a few hours to come to Kelmscott to pay his tribute to William Morris. Then we all went to tea at the Manor. Afterwards May Morris wrote:

¹ Miss Morris died in the autumn of 1938 and left Kelmscott Manor to the University of Oxford.

*Kelmscott Manor,
Lechlade,
Gloucestershire.*

*An English
Ranee*

28th Oct., '34.

My dear William Rothenstein,

Thank you for your appreciative and understanding letter, which gave me great pleasure. It was a wonderfully touching afternoon for me to see all the old friends and to know we were all thinking the same thoughts. I hoped you stayed till the moon rose and before leaving saw the house lit up inside like a fairy house, and people coming and going past the windows, shall always think of that picture of it, so full of light and movement—a happy dream. I shall remember your generous offer about a portrait drawing but I can't think of anyone at the moment who could be roped in for it. Many thanks.

Yes, you must come quietly before long, when we are normal. I am writing with the sun streaming in, in the Tapestry room—like summer.

Yours always,

MAY MORRIS.

The old Ranee of Sarawak had wanted to come to the opening of the hall, but was not well enough. She had known Morris, meeting him often at the Grange, the Burne-Jones's home. Like most who had known that remarkable group of men, her memories of them were precious. Indeed it was in Burne-Jones's studio that I first met the Ranee. Later we had a common friend in W. H. Hudson. I was to win the friendship of another intimate of the Burne-Jones circle, Mrs Gaskell. She has the indescribable charm of intellect and of person which has made her beloved by men and women in every walk of life. It was Mrs Gaskell who inaugurated the British Red Cross War Library and therewith brought solace to countless wounded men both at home and abroad.

We had got in touch with the Ranee again through her reading of my early adventures in Paris. My recollections

An English started memories of her own. Like many women, she was a
Ranee natural letter-writer:

2, *Albert Road,*
Regent's Park, N.W. 1.

16.8.1933.

Dear Sir William,

Another epistle from me! Don't begin to yawn, but you, your beautiful lady and me have come together again, and last night, I took your Vol. I of *Men and Memories* to bed with me and began to read it again from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and realized once more how many mutual friends of years long past we have had! For instance—Puvix de Chavannes, Stopford Brooke, who called himself my *best* cousin, Aristide Bruant, whom I breakfasted with at Montmartre, Burne-Jones, you know, Forain who gave me two of his drawings, Grille d'Egout!! and Mimi Pattes-en-l'Air who was presented to me at the place they danced at, when they made me a little bob, and said 'une Reine d'Asie!' and kissed my hand and 'Nous serons vos sujets', and danced somewhat excitedly but not indecently!!—and I knew Stevens, and Gustave Moreau—and one evening I went to Le Château Rouge with a friend of mine, Hugues Le Roux, who years after blossomed out as a Sénateur, and I spent the whole evening with the so-called cutthroats at Château Rouge and thoroughly enjoyed it. One of the said ruffians wearing a red tie, was supposed to have killed some one, came to me, he held a mandoline—Voyons, Citoyenne, je vais vous chanter quelquechose. I tried to look pleased and wondered. What do you think it was? *Rappelles-toi*, Musset's words, and Mozart's tune!! Then at the end, he turned to Le Roux, winked at me, and said, Mes compliments, mon cher!!—at which Le Roux was a bit embarrassed, but I giggled, and it didn't matter naturally!—Bourget, Maurice Ephrussé, Loti! even Gandenage of the Revue de Paris took me to see queer corners of Paris—I even visited the Chiffonniers, around Paris, and in all my old expeditions, I only found friends—I can not add lovers, as that would not be true!! But life can

be so beautiful if one finds interest in all sorts and conditions provided one can sympathize with them. Who knows but whether, when off to pastures new, I may not meet with a bit of red tie from the Château Rouge, and again who knows there might be a bit of the pretty shoe of Mimi Pattes-en-l'air!!—come to meet me! When we meet, we will have a lovely talk about those days of long ago. Love to you both.

Affectionately yours,

MARGARET SARAWAK.

*An English
Ranee*

The Ranee's zest for life was infectious. Her eighty odd years had taken little from her rich vitality. In Cornwall she was digging up ancient inscribed stones. She had an oriental sense of the sacredness of all life; she wrote from Lelant:

9.5.1934.

Darling Guillaume,

Si Dieu me prête vie I hope to be back at 2, Albert Road the second week in June. I do *hope* to see, as soon as may be, my beloved G. and his fair lady!!—But just now, the world is lovely here. You walk across a field, and cowslips spring forth all blossom and fragrance, from under one's shoes!—and you look at an apparently snowed over land, warm and lovely from blackthorn blossoms—paths through woods like an upset sky pretending to be blue hyacinths. And the sea, my word, a winking expanse of sapphires!—All lovely!! How I wish you were here!—Et les paysans, sans vous connaître, en passant, vous disent “Bon soir”. And there it all is!—And here we all are—for how long—alas, je me fais vieille—but waive that fast aside—for I remain young, so long as I have friends like you!—to write silly things to!—And do you know anything of Paul Cohen-Portheim—I am in love with his translated *Message of Asia*, and do so appreciate its foreword by a certain Alan Harris. I wish I knew!! But then I am a bit mad about Asiatics—Where is our dear Toller? I am afraid his vicissitudes have frightfully affected his health. I so often think of him.

*A memory
of Burne-
Jones*

His little silver box, he so lovelily gave me is always by me on the writing table. My Dear! What a lovely thing it would be, if one could go about gold solder in hand, mending and fixing up broken hearts!—You do wonderfully—but I am not clever at it!—I understand worms better. I rescued a wounded worm from the middle of the road yesterday, slithered part of a cabbage leaf under its writhing form, carried it to a nice damp ditch near by, and felt real joy at seeing it revive and glide off out of sight!!—of course I am getting ga ga—can't help it.

Your loving friend,

M. S.

The Ranee was not to return to her Cornish home. Her infirmity kept her in London but did not spoil her pleasure in life, nor her sense of fun. Sitting upright in her chair, her head bound with a kerchief, under which her white hair lay low on her forehead, across her knees a rich silk covering from Sarawak, she looked the Queen. Her talk was of earlier days, of her friendship with Burne-Jones, Hudson and Henry James, with whom she had been on affectionate terms; and the affection she felt for her friends she expressed unhesitatingly. She told us once how Burne-Jones, as she sat with him in his studio, said, 'My dear, you have written to me many lovely letters; but people who don't know you might misinterpret them. Now I am going to fetch two of my best drawings; then we will place the letters between them, put them on the fire, and watch them burn together!'

No doubt she would have liked to lavish her gift of affection on her husband, had he allowed of this. She always spoke of him as a wise and courageous ruler. Indeed, she rose up in wrath when Lord Esher, having the ear of King Edward, hinted that Sarawak should be made a British Protectorate. Against this the Ranee fought, during her husband's absence; never, while she was alive! She sought an interview with King Edward, and the project went no further.

I had a curious experience with Lord Esher, who came to my studio at Kensington to tell me he had acquired my painting of T. E. Lawrence, and how pleased he was to own it. He remarked too on the moderate price I put on it. Some years later, after Lawrence's death, I was asked for the loan of the portrait. I wrote to the dowager Lady Esher, but the painting, she replied, had never been in their possession! This was odd; but perhaps Lord Esher had disposed of it elsewhere. I wrote to Evelyn Shaw,¹ who had been responsible for the exhibition from which Lord Esher had originally acquired the painting. Shaw replied it was not Esher, but Duveen who had bought it! But Lord Duveen, in answer to my enquiry, declared this was not so. Then my wife saw, in a provincial paper, a reference to the painting being in Belgrade. Lady Astor was going to Belgrade. She promised to make enquiries; finally Mr J. Balfour, one of the attachés there, wrote that the portrait belonged to Prince Paul of Jugoslavia! It had been given him by Lord Duveen. If there can be so much mystery surrounding the work of a living painter, how much more difficult to unravel the pedigree of an old master!

*A
Lawrence
portrait
astray*

¹ Secretary to the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition.

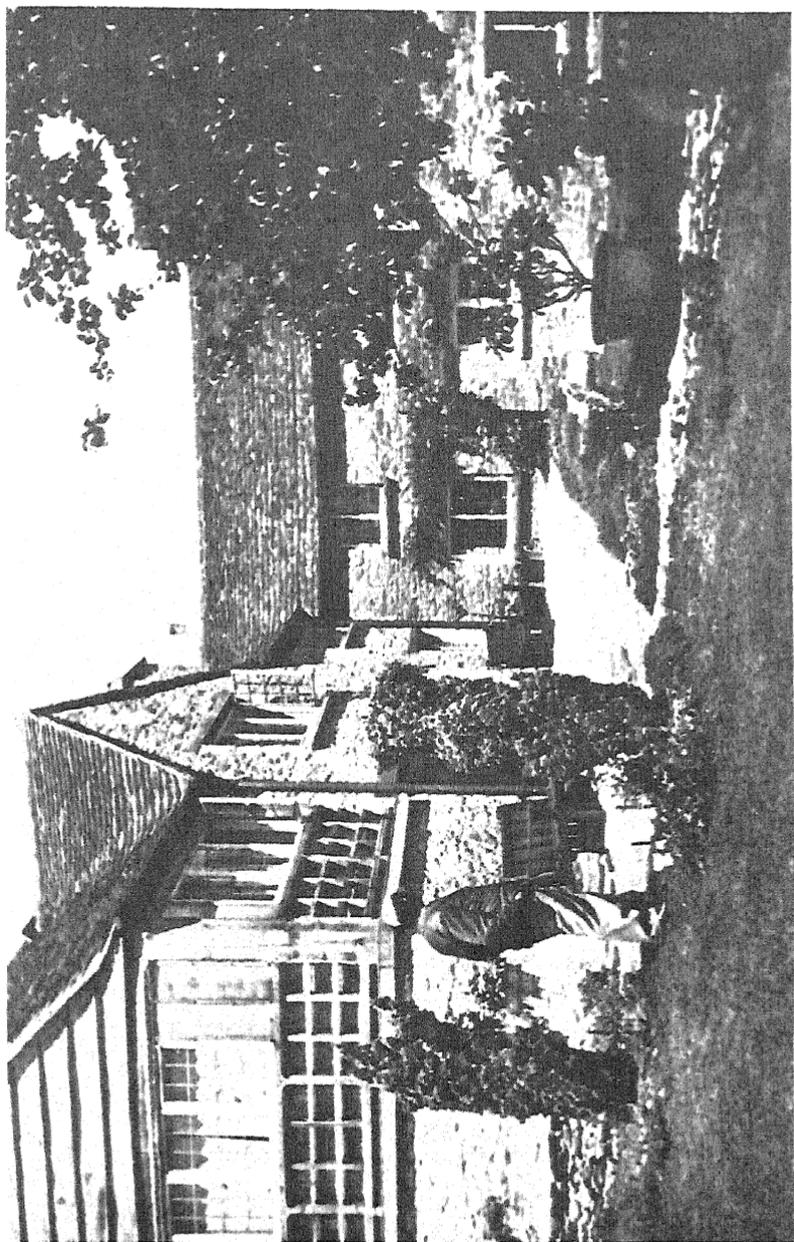
CHAPTER XXIV

LAST DAYS OF A. E.

*A pottery
venture*

AT Xmas time we decorate our cottage with green, silver and gold—with the bright tawdry things to be found at Woolworth's and elsewhere, which, at this season, give a medieval character to a white-walled cottage, reminding one of the decorations round the little images in churches abroad. Crackers, too, with their showy colour lend a novel charm to the dinner table, as do the gay paper caps they contain, to the heads of the diners. The transformation lasts for a few days only; then the bright shimmering trifles are restored to their boxes, and the rooms resume their habitual appearance. Against the white walls of a cottage, flowers look their loveliest. I notice that many of the Staffordshire figures which ornamented cottage chimney pieces were made to hold flowers. These figures and groups, modelled with a naïve elegance, were manufactured by the thousand to ornament the homes of countrymen and townsmen, to whom their subjects were perfectly adapted. What manufactures to-day have their inventiveness, show such charm of form and colour or are so well suited to a popular taste?

So much trivial and vulgar rubbish is put on the market, that I persuaded some of the pottery students at the Royal College of Art to model a set of figures representing sporting subjects, some of which were promising; but none of the pottery manufacturers who came to see them would bite. But a hopeful experiment was carried through by Messrs Brain, a firm of potters at Stoke who approached a number of gifted artists for designs. Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell,



OUR COTTAGE AT FAR OAKRIDGE

Ben Nicholson, Graham Sutherland, Paul Nash, my brother Albert, among others, made excellent designs for table services. An exhibition of these which it fell to me to open was held at Harrod's stores. So successful were the exhibits that for a time, I was told, they affected the sale of Harrod's usual wares. After the function I was taken by Sir Woodman Burbidge and his son round the various departments; we moved about without discomfort, for they were less crowded than other stores I had been to, and my wife used to tell a malicious story, that I said to Sir Woodman—'But how delightful, not a soul to interfere with one's comfort!'

I was asked by friends of the Carlisle Gallery what my terms would be for buying pictures for them. If I were allowed to buy the works of little-known men, of course, I would need no remuneration. A yearly sum of £100 was placed at my disposal. With this modest sum I was able to purchase works by promising young artists; later an extra £100 was voted by the Town Council. During the half-dozen years I have acted for the Carlisle Gallery I have got together the nucleus of a good collection, at no great cost to the City of Carlisle. I was asked to make a drawing for the city of Sir William Bragg, a native of Carlisle, which I was indeed pleased to do, for not only is Bragg one of the most attractive of men, he has also a striking head and presence.

About this time mock trials were arranged for the benefit of the London hospitals. Sir Reginald Blomfield, Eric Gill and I were tried—for what crime escapes me—by G. K. Chesterton as judge. When Chesterton came into the private room before the performance and sat down, the chair promptly broke under him. This did not surprise Chesterton; he appeared to take it as a natural consequence of seating himself.

During the following year I went to Lincolnshire to paint a portrait of Sir Charles Welby, on his retirement from the chairmanship of the County Council. I prefer to paint a portrait, always for me a trying task, in my studio. To live with the sitter, to see his every aspect more suggestive than the

A country gentleman one chosen, to have to keep a cheerful face when in despair over the work, is a strain one need not endure when the sitter comes for an hour or two to one's studio and is forgotten until he returns. But I found the atmosphere of Sir Charles Welby's house, as was his company, quiet and restful. He might have been one of Horace Walpole's contemporaries, he had the cultured and enlightened character of the eighteenth-century country gentleman, taking pride in his park and gardens, in his fine library, and playing his part on the political stage of the House of Commons in addition to carrying out his local duties. It was pleasant to resume the acquaintance of his sister, Mrs Harry Cust, who was staying in the house. One of the original 'Souls', she has the graceful poise and delicate sensibility associated with that select company. Her husband, Harry Cust, had been a notable figure among the advanced Tories during the eighties and nineties. He was the intimate of W. E. Henley and his circle—the Henley Regatta Max called it—and one of the social personalities of the time; like George Wyndham, a friend to letters, to liberty and to those who lived and thought boldly and adventurously. Mrs Cust had carved a noble recumbent figure of her husband for the church at Belton, where lie many Custs and Brownlows. She regretted that so little was now known of her husband's full and fruitful life. Charles Whibley might have written of him; now he was dead and only Barrie remained of the old Henley group. But Barrie did not think he was the person to do it:

Adelphi Terrace House,
17th October, 1935.

Dear Rothenstein,

I like having your letter and the name of Mrs Harry Cust is pleasant to me as was his with the fascinating wit of him. But there is nothing in my dull mind to-day to write down. The chance was lost with Charles Whibley's departure from the scene. As I daresay you know he had a memoir of Henley meditated and it may be material gathered, but I believe he

never found time to start on the book and his library was sold and his wife (a fine one) married again and lives I know not where but I understand in a distant part of the world. Please give my kind regards to Mrs Cust and with the same to yourself,

*The empty
perambu-
lator*

Yours sincerely,

J. M. BARRIE.

A strange, elusive person was Barrie, with his small, complicated, crumpled features, as though some inner anguish were corroding his being. I last met him at a garden fête at Stanway, held to get funds for the restoration of the village church, when he spoke golden words for his beloved friend Lady Wemyss. When speaking, he turned his body restlessly from right to left, from left to right; his words fell from him slowly, as though with effort, yet they formed a perfect pattern of sensibility and wit.

My wife declares that during the afternoon she saw him wheeling a perambulator up and down; he so loved babies! But when he left it and she looked within, there was no babe—the pram was empty!

After painting Sir Charles Welby I was asked to make a portrait of Claud Montefiore for the University College of Southampton, of which he had for long been President. Though a man of great wealth, Montefiore was a saint. His velvet eyes shone with goodness and, too, with a gentle humour. His inattention to appearance meant that he came to sit, now clean shaved, now with three or four days' growth of bristly beard. He was a strong anti-Zionist and foresaw trouble through the Balfour declaration, though how great the trouble was to be he did not live to know. I too had some sympathy with the Arab point of view, though I mistrusted the Grand Mufti, a fox in looks and colour, whom I met at the Athenaeum, of which, during his visit to England, he was made an honorary member. Had Lawrence lived would he have called a halt to the Arab policy of arson and murder? A useless question; for this is now the accepted

Poet and painter policy of revolution. It was successfully practised nearer home, in Ireland.

Strange it was that when Sinn Fein won its freedom so few of her writers remained in Dublin. Even A. E. was growing restless there. Like Yeats he respected de Valera; but there were tendencies in the Free State which A. E. disliked. Was it he, or Yeats, who told how Parnell came down the road, and said to a cheering man, 'Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stones'? A. E. took rooms in London, brought his books with him, and except the summer's painting in his beloved Donegal, made no plans for returning to Ireland.

He was devoted to his painting. 'Do you like writing as well as painting?' he wrote to me. 'I don't, though I can't paint or draw otherwise than as an untaught amateur. When I write my best poem there is nothing to look at except bad handwriting—the zest of the eye is not satisfied. But if I paint, something begins to grow under my fingers—my ignorance of painting prevents my knowing how bad it is.'

And he wrote again from 1, Brunswick Gardens, 24.11.34:

Dear Rothenstein,

How lucky you are going to paint. While I who want to paint more than anything am solicited to devise economic themes to preserve ancient Indian cultures in American reservations and I do not know what else. Do you remember the Gita? 'Let a man attend to his own Dharma. The Dharma of another is full of danger.' Once I gave up art for poetry and poetry for economics, and have had no peace with either art or poetry or economics. You have stuck to your Dharma and will go on painting happily to the end of your days and will probably go on painting masterpieces in your Paradise.

Yes, thanks, I will come on Thursday. Will I bring a sandwich and a thermos flask of tea in case you forget I am coming? You remember last time you asked me you went off on an orgy of painting and when you returned you had

forgotten, quite rightly, all about it, and I rushed to eat somebody else's supper.

*The
Avatars*

Yours affectionately, A. E.

How shocking that I could forget that I had invited A. E. ! and how like him to think it natural ! I admired A. E.'s paintings; he had a rare faculty for making his figures of children and young girls, flitting in and out of the painted sunshine and shadows, fit perfectly into the woods and meadows he composed for them. He pressed me to join him the following summer in Donegal; but it was not to be. On his return from a visit to America, he complained of dysentery. I was alarmed at his loss of weight, but 'there is nothing that a month or two can't put right', he declared. But the trouble was serious. I was glad to have cheered him over his last work, *The Avatars*, for few of his friends, he said, cared for it, and he was not himself satisfied with it. He wrote from Sussex Gardens:

Dear Rothenstein,

It was like you, most kind, to write as you did about *The Avatars*. It pleases me indeed that you should have found things to like in it. I thought I had deferred writing it too long. It was to have been a kind of balance to *The Interpreters*, which I wrote when I had all the literary nerves I was endowed with, and it was to be a kind of sequel. But editing a weekly paper took up all my time and when I started it I know my intuition came by fits and starts and there were patches which I felt awkward and did not know what to do to put them right.

However, if it pleased you I am happy and feel it can't be as poor as I thought it when I read it in print. However, all that one has finished seems bad. We are allowed to work on because we think it is going to be good and with the finis comes the end of the glamour, nature's way of allowing us to go on doing things. Thanks, dear Rothenstein, for restoring a little of my confidence.

Yours ever, A. E.

*Farewell to
A. E.*

A. E. had not the intellectual intensity of James Stephens, or of Yeats. Neither in his talk nor in his poetry did he rise to their heights. But he had other qualities; his wisdom, his humaneness and imagination were at the service of all who came to him. And he was completely himself—self-sufficient, unaffected by other personalities. He would come into a room, sink into a chair, and at once his talk began, effortless, flowing on, like a river which meets with no obstacles, no rocks, rapids or waterfalls to interrupt the smoothness of its current.

A. E.'s goodness and charitableness were notorious; George Moore found words of praise for him which he gave to no other Irishman. But A. E. mistrusted Moore; he disliked his early work and doubted the genuineness of the later Moore, the Moore of *The Brook Kerith* and of *Abelard*. Moore expected praise from A. E. for *The Brook Kerith*. During a visit to Ebury Street, A. E. avoided the subject. When he was leaving, Moore went with him to the door and then asked A. E. what he thought of his presentment of Jesus. 'My dear Moore', came the reply, 'Jesus had many aspects. At least he was *intelligent*.'

But it was seldom one heard A. E. animadvert on his dislikes; he tended rather to overpraise, having a kindly feeling towards anyone whose imagination was stirred by some aspect of beauty.

CHAPTER XXV

RETIREMENT FROM OFFICIAL LIFE

DURING the preparations for King George's Jubilee, the Fine Art Commission was consulted, and together with Lutyens I was put on a committee to advise on the street decorations. We met at the Office of Works, under the chairmanship of Ormsby-Gore, then First Commissioner; somewhat late in the day, I thought, considering all there was to be done. Apparently the King had been averse to elaborate preparations, partly through modesty, and concerned, it was said, lest he might not be well enough to go through the ordeal. Now that he understood how many would be pouring into London from all over the Empire he withdrew his objections. The Office of Works had prepared promising plans for the decoration of the Mall and Whitehall. On either side of the Mall were to be great masts, each surmounted by a lion and crown. The lion and crown I got one of the students of the Sculpture School to design; he made an excellent model, with which the Office of Works was well pleased. Casts made from this model, painted and gilded, served again for the Coronation of King George VI. The Westminster Corporation also had a scheme, a poor one, we thought, and Lutyens offered to take it in hand, but his offer was rejected, to London's loss. The City was willing to take advice; whereupon I suggested, instead of the usual beflagging, concentration at certain points—a couple of triumphal arches, for instance; one at Temple Bar, where the King enters the City precincts, another on the Embankment. But the police, it was objected, would counter anything

Preparations for the Jubilee

*Dull
bridges
decorated*

likely to interfere with the traffic. Instead of arches something could be done to transform the unprepossessing railway bridges across Ludgate Hill and the Embankment. To this proposal the City representative agreed. The time was short, but a group of students from the Royal College, working late into the night, produced a brilliant baroque affair for the Ludgate Hill bridge; while the Slade School students, on their part, prepared gay decorations for the bridge across the Embankment. The designs, painted on three-ply wood, skilfully pieced together on the sides of each bridge, gave the effect of triumphal arches, and added something fresh and entertaining to the general decorations. Alas for the fabled generosity of the City of London! Nothing was asked (shame on my head) to compensate the College students for their work, yet I found some difficulty in getting the mere expenses, which came to no more than £40, passed by the City Surveyor. The Jubilee itself was a moving success. The day was bright and cloudless. We saw the procession from the Athenaeum, perfectly ordered, impressive, but not vainglorious, pass between the vast crowds, packed close together.

Dr Thomas Jones, who had now left the Cabinet Secretariat to become secretary to the Pilgrim Trust, standing by me to watch the procession, and moved by the genuine feeling of the crowds along the route, remarked how well the English monarchy suited the English people. When all was over, the crowds, so immobile during the long hours of waiting, melted away, leaving on the streets a white crop of paper.

During this year the methods of training at the Royal College of Art were severely criticized in the Journal of the Design and Industries Association. The policy of the College, it was objected, was to train artists rather than designers for industry. The attack was pressed home by Frank Pick in a minute to the Board of Education, demanding a change of policy in the direction of the College. I had always held the view that the business of the College was to

give the best training possible to the students, whether they aimed at being painters, independent artist-designers or humbler cotton-print or wallpaper designers for private firms, and believed further that well-trained students would quickly adapt themselves to the particular conditions they would meet with in industry. Nor did I feel that vocational training for particular industries was the best course to pursue for a central college of art; this should rather be the task of provincial schools in touch with local industries. It was now made clear to me that the Board was no longer satisfied with this position; the time had come for me to make way for a younger man, with a policy more in accord with industrial conditions. After an interview with Sir Henry Pelham, then Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education, I asked leave of the President, Lord Halifax, to retire at the end of the session. Percy Jowett, then Principal of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, was appointed to succeed me. No better choice could have been made. He started with the confidence of the Board; under his able guidance the College was unlikely to become industrialized. I bade farewell to staff and students; not displeased to be freed from official duties.

Before my retirement I was bidden for the last time to the Royal Academy Banquet, for, no longer an official, I would not again be invited to sit at that gathering of all the talents. I was amused watching Sickert as he leant forward beaming to applaud the worst speeches. Meeting him after the dinner I noticed his youthful appearance—it was one of the intervals when he had no beard—his hair was still thick and retaining some of its gold. But he was feeling old, he declared, he would soon be one of the immortals. Not so, Walter, I chaffed him, you are immortal now! Look after your health and enjoy your immortality while it lasts!

One thing I learned while at the College: that there are many gifted people, men and women, who have initiative while they are studying, but through a lack of energy let it pass from them, and so drift. Were they to work with others under inspiring leadership they might pass fruitful years

Neglect of artists practising their art. That which Walt Disney's genius has done for the films (one hears of his employing two hundred artists—as many as Rubens!—who cooperate with him, not only executing but also inventing) might be done for the decoration of hospitals, theatres, factories, public and industrial institutions of every kind. It is a dream to-day, but might well not be a dream in the future. What a full life for men of great power and for others less gifted, would be thus provided! How wasteful, how wasted their gifts to-day; how ignominious the careers of most of us, parasites on a society which doesn't even want us. It is strange that in a democracy the arts should yet be dependent on the caprice of those with whom a worthy subject matter is of no account. During my tenure of the Chair of Civic Art at Sheffield, I tried to arouse some interest in the possibilities of the wider use of local artists and craftsmen in the city and suburbs, but without success.

Each year the students at the Royal College produced a play and gave a dance when they covered their common room with brilliantly executed paintings, paintings produced in a week or more which showed how quickly and how cheaply mural paintings could be carried out, for great stores for instance. Why, fresh and entertaining decoration could be planned and painted two or three times a year at such places as Harrod's or Selfridge's, at no great cost. There was some talk of Sir Montague Burton getting Stanley Spencer to paint a decoration for one of his factories; but though Spencer wrote out a remarkable scheme for such a work, nothing came of it.

At least I could look back with pleasure on my relations with many of the students, with Henry Moore, the most intelligent and gifted among the sculptors, with Cyril Mahoney, Raymond Coxon, A. K. Lawrence, Henry Carr, Eric Ravilious, Edward Bawden, Harold Jones, Albert Houthuesen, Barnett Freedman, Recco Capey, Robert Austin, Alan Sorrell, Percy Bliss, Hugh Finney, Vivian Pitchforth, Robert Baker, Edward Payne, Edward le Bas, Diana Murphy,

Evelyn Dunbar, Nora Braden, Cecilia Dunbar Kilburn—I cannot go on with the list, so many were there, and gifted in so many directions. As birds, once they have left their nests, are free for ever of their parents, so one's old students adventure forth, free from the bondage they endured, leaving one far behind, in act and, frequently, in memory.

*Drawings
for the
National
Portrait
Gallery*

On the initiative of the Registrar of the College, Athole Hay, a number of my friends generously subscribed a sum with intent to offer some of my portrait drawings to the National Portrait Gallery. Thirty drawings were chosen by the Trustees. As these were mostly of living men, they were to be held in trust, a new and convenient departure, for hitherto a portrait could only be accepted ten years after the decease of the subject portrayed.

The drawings chosen for the National Portrait Gallery were shown for a week at Agnew's in Bond Street; among them was one of Mr Baldwin. I met there his private secretary Sir Geoffrey Fry, who seemed pleased with the presentment of his chief. I had not shown the drawing to Mr Baldwin, being shy of so doing, but Geoffrey Fry's opinion of it was so flattering that I might as well have done so, and I had a generous note, after he had seen it, from Mr Baldwin himself. There was also a drawing included of Sir Aurel Stein; the most modest of men, he was pleased to think he would be represented in the National Collection of portraits. Another drawing was of A. E. Housman. I was about to write to condole with him on this, knowing his dislike for more than one of my interpretations, when I heard he was seriously ill; it would not have done to tell him of this selection at such a time.

As my appointment as Principal was a part-time one only, I retired without a pension. The drop in my income was considerable. We gave up our large house on Campden Hill and took a flat in a new building at Highgate, overlooking Kenwood. Flat life was new to us. We found the confined space and promiscuity trying; but we could get away when we wanted to our cottage in Gloucestershire. At Highgate

A great book on Spain we were close to the Heath, and walking thereabouts, I wondered that we painters make so little use of the London scene. Since Whistler made people see the Thames and its bridges and river-side houses with fresh eyes, no artist has made a part of London his own. But I am forgetting Muirhead Bone, who, notably in his earlier drawings of Newgate, St James's Hall and the Egyptian Hall, again brought a new vision to bear on the city. It was rather, however, a London in process of destruction which attracted him. His name will be, I fancy, more closely associated with Spain; for the superb series of drawings he made there, in the years immediately preceding the civil war, are among the weightiest records of our time. It was a strange and fortunate foreboding which sent Bone to make these drawings of buildings many of which were to suffer damage or destruction. Bone is, indeed, one of the rare artists whose work has the perfection of the older draughtsmen. There is nothing that baffles his eye or his pencil, and he is able to compose and select incidents from the scene before him while making highly finished drawings.

For a time, in his earlier years, Bone lived at the Vale of Health, and as I wandered over the Heath, many memories were evoked, of him and of George Calderon, the Michael Fields, John Masefield and Sturge Moore. Sturge Moore still lives at Hampstead. He inherited the journals kept over many years by the Michael Fields. From these he made a selection for publication, and knowing my close relations with these two valiant ladies, and my love for them, he asked me to write something by way of an introduction:

40, *Well Walk*, N.W. 3.

17.3.33.

My dear Rothenstein,

I am delighted with your admirable introduction which is almost entirely felicitous.

May I venture to suggest that 'wonder how far these extracts will give, etc.,' casts a doubt on their value. You introduce friends to your readers in hopes that they will become



LORD BALDWIN

their friends. This can never be but by insufficient acquaintance preceding that which is more deeply revealing. I have pencilled a few words which would take the place of those which I hope you will feel with me cast an unnecessary chill.

I have also suggested that if before the extract from your book you could conjure up something of the impression they made on you in the earlier nineties, this would add something which no one else alive can give us. I never saw them in those days. May be you found them rather a joke, but even this would enhance the other riper appreciation by contrast.

Pray forgive me for, after mature consideration, accepting the invitation you give me to suggest improvements.

Yours ever,

THOMAS STURGE MOORE.

When the book appeared under the title of *Works and Days* (this was in 1933) no more than two hundred copies were sold. Alas, the fame the two poets believed would surely come to them was not yet to illumine their poems; and there were few, now that Ricketts and Shannon were no more, to remember the beauty of their lives, perishable like the flowers they loved and tended. At least there were some aware of this beauty. Maurice Baring held the work of these ladies in high esteem.

Dear Rothenstein,

You couldn't have sent me anything in the world I liked better than the *Works and Days* of Michael Field. I have admired their work all my life without at first knowing who they were and when I knew admiring them still more. I have one poem in MS. which is hung up framed in my home at Rottingdean.

Thanking you again,

Yours,

MAURICE BARING.

Sturge Moore, indeed, does much to continue the austere living and high thinking of Ricketts and Shannon and the

*Heights of
Hamp-
stead*

Michael Fields. With his long white beard, fresh complexion and black skull cap he looks the poet and sage he is, as he sits among his familiars at Well Walk, his cool white room fastidiously hung with Shannon lithographs and Ricketts drawings. Nearby are the Copleys, husband and wife sharing studio and drawing room in one, working industriously, each in his, or her, own corner, and in the evenings charming their circle of intimates by their conversation and by their works placed on easels about the room. Ramsay MacDonald, too, had his home at Hampstead. He would walk on the Heath in the early morning with John Drinkwater and other friends. He often regretted that his political obligations took up overmuch of his time, leaving him little leisure for other interests. Even at his busiest, when he was Prime Minister, he liked to get away to the Club, to lunch quietly with non-political friends; he had a touching respect for writers and painters, and nothing pleased Ramsay MacDonald more than to meet them. I have elsewhere referred to his lively admiration for Max Beerbohm, which Max on his part returned.

Statesmen had ever a fascination for Max. I bear in mind an occasion when I consulted him on the choice of drawings for a new book of portraits, doubtful whether drawings of Baldwin and MacDonald should be included since their faces were so familiar through the daily press. Max chid me, saying these two would remain important figures when most of our writers would be forgotten; of course I must include the drawings. I took his advice, deeming no one wiser than Max.

When, in June 1935, MacDonald resigned from the Premiership, his friends thought he would retire from political life. He had clearly been feeling the strain of continued office, and he could now take his place as an Elder Statesman. I proposed to Alec Martin that this was a moment when Ramsay's non-political friends might offer him a tribute of their affection. Alec Martin consulted Lord Horder, who agreed, but they and Sir Louis Greig took the matter into

their own hands and invited MacDonald and twenty of his more intimate friends to dine at Claridge's Hotel. After dinner, in response to Lord Horder, John Buchan and others who spoke, Ramsay MacDonald made one of his most charming speeches. He was always at his best on these private occasions. He was not retiring, he said, but returning to his real life, coming back to us all, to spend his days, away from politics, among creative people. And he proceeded to describe his personal relations with each of us in turn, relations which were now to become, he said, still closer. He would have leisure, leisure for reflection and for reading and writing too; he was planning an autobiography. But pressure was brought on him to remain in the Government, though as Lord President of the Council he no longer spoke with his old authority.

When Axel Munthe was in London I asked him to meet MacDonald. I was amused and a little embarrassed at the immediate attack Munthe made on him (this was just after Haile Selassie had escaped from Abyssinia), saying that MacDonald and the Cabinet had been bluffed by Mussolini. Had his army and supplies been intercepted he would never have gone to war with England; in fact the Italian people had been hoping England would intervene. Aubrey Waterfield, too, bore out what Munthe had said.

On another occasion, when Ramsay MacDonald suggested our lunching together, I asked Yeats to meet him. Yeats, who had lately been seriously ill, was weak-voiced, almost inaudible, but as he talked his voice grew stronger, and he kept the conversation going throughout the luncheon, Ramsay listening and saying little. Later, in the smoking room, Yeats got on to the subject of Berkeley and Swift, spinning theories of Swift's character, of Stella's and Vanessa's, and presently George Trevelyan joined us, and as Yeats proceeded, getting more and more eloquent as he went on, Trevelyan, attracted, eager to bring his fine Whig sense of accuracy to bear on Yeats's improvisations, tried vainly to break in, while Yeats, his right hand raised as it were, for-

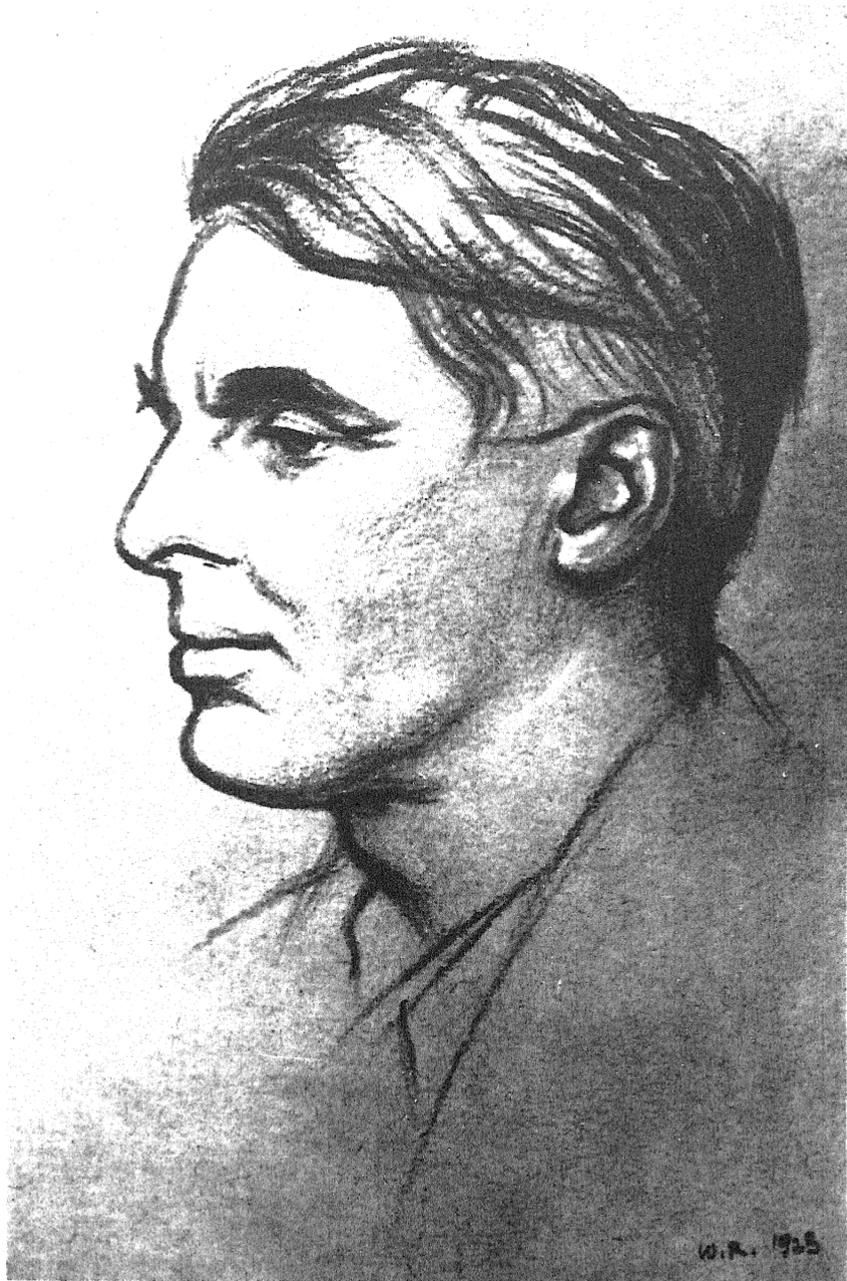
Yeats holds
forth

bidding interruption, grew ever more fantastic and inventive. He was trying, he said finally, to inspire the youth of Ireland with the national ideals found in Berkeley and in Swift. The poetry of the Irish movement had served its purpose and was dead. Berkeley learned his nationalism in the university, Swift in politics. He could not accept the new Realism—that the seen can exist independently of seeing. He spoke of the enigma of Berkeley's personality, the fiery entries in his commonplace book, the contrast with Berkeley's portraits and his later work, and of Berkeley's love of conversation—the dominant trait in his character. Berkeley returned from America when he had finished telling the Americans of his new philosophy.

After Trevelyan left us, Ramsay wondered, he said, how he could have wished to interrupt—he himself sat spell-bound; he could not have broken the thread of Yeats's wonderful talk.

Yeats sat usually alone at the Athenaeum and spoke to no one, but my friend John Sparrow told me how about this time he was conversing with Yeats at the Mitre at Oxford, and how Yeats's words 'the tragedy of sexual intercourse is the perpetual virginity of the souls', resounded through the lounge, and of the startled looks on the part of persons reading the *Sporting and Dramatic News* and the *Bystander*.

'Sexual intercourse', he went on, 'is the attempt to solve the eternal antinomy, doomed to failure because it takes place only on one side of the gulf, which separates the one and the many, or, if you like, God and man. But the antinomy is there and can be represented only by a *myth*. The whole of life, *the world itself*, arises out of the opposition of these two. You must have a myth. No one can live without a myth. No myth can be proved; but we test it by our everyday experience.' Yeats himself had no metaphysics, though plenty of mysticism.



CHAPTER XXVI

CONVERSATION OF YEATS

IT was Christopher Hassall who told me that Eddie Marsh would soon be retiring from the Dominions Office, where, refusing promotion, he had acted as Private Secretary to each succeeding Minister. But it was as the extravagantly generous friend to poets and artists that some token of gratitude was due to him; for Eddie, by no means affluent, spends the greater part of his means on acquiring paintings by young artists and helping young poets, denying himself all but the bare necessities of life. True, he is a great social figure, a constant diner-out; and he misses no first night at the play. Now his friends decided to give a dinner in his honour. Eddie was pleased at the prospect of coming as their guest, but nervous, at the same time, for he would have to speak, and he had never yet made a speech. There came a brilliant gathering of poets, writers and painters, with Winston Churchill in the chair. John Masefield spoke for Eddie's poet friends, James Agate for the actors and I for the artists; while Winston Churchill wound up with a handsome tribute to Eddie as Civil Servant, telling how, when he first came as Minister to the Dominions Office, he was greeted by an intensely nervous Eddie: 'Good morning, sir, I believe you are my new Secretary!'

*Tribute to
Eddie
Marsh*

Eddie replied in a speech, perfect in form and matter:

'Mr Chairman—No, Winston: Masefield, Will, Jim: all my kind friends and benefactors.

'None of you has ever heard me make a speech before and if I can help it, you never will again.

'In the eighteenth century there was a member of the House which you, Sir, adorn, who became celebrated under the name of Single-speech Hamilton, because during a membership of twenty years or so, he spoke only once. I wish I could think that after this evening I should be known as Single-speech Marsh. But I haven't much hope of this, because Hamilton's speech, in addition to being single, was an exceedingly good one.

'His delivery, I am sure, was more impressive than mine. I wonder, Sir, if you remember a morning at the Colonial Office over thirty years ago, when I came into your room and said in a hoarse croaking whisper: "I'm afraid I shan't be much use to-day, because I've lost my voice;" and you replied: "What? is that resonant organ extinct?"

'So much for my delivery. As to my matter—what *am* I to say? To talk about myself would be egotistical: to talk about anything else would be irrelevant. But there is one thing about which I can speak without being either egotistical or irrelevant—just simply, deeply, humbly grateful—and that is, what I see before me here. It is a sight to make my good angel weep tears of joy; and indeed I hope that he will do this, vicariously, so as to save me from the danger of doing anything so un-English myself.

'Last Saturday, *The Daily Mirror* printed as what it calls a Thought for To-day, one of Landor's marble sentences: "A great man is he who can call together the most select company when it pleases him." I notice only to disclaim the agreeable inference which might be drawn from this aphorism. Nor will I let myself be too puffed up by the speeches which have been made. Dr Johnson said that a man is not on oath in an epitaph, and I suppose the same thing applies to the man who praises a fellow-creature on such an evening as this. But those who have spoken to-night did seem to think that in my small way I have done the Arts some service. It would be churlish to contradict them; and I will only say that if it be true I am a proud and a happy man.

I will not, as some practised speakers might, try any fur-

ther experiments on your patience, and I will only ask you all once more, and those as well who are not here but have contributed to my delightful present, to accept my wondering thanks for the kindness which—coming from men and women such as you—has made this the greatest occasion of my life. If I were to single out all those to whom my special gratitude is due, I should remind Charles Cochran too vividly of an author's first-night speech; but there are two whom I *must* name: Christopher Hassall, who has harnessed Pegasus to the task of secretary; and Will Rothenstein, the only begetter of this festivity, who firmly, and as I now perceive wisely, overruled all my qualms and tremors. Once again, thank you with all my heart.'

The Times next day reported me as the giver of the dinner, at which two hundred guests were present. My friends must have wondered whence came this affluence!

Another feast which I attended was given to H. G. Wells on his seventieth birthday, at which Shaw, in his opening speech, in praising Wells disparaged Kipling; an unfortunate comparison which Wells in his reply rightly resented. Wells then made an apologia for his life in a singularly sane, modest and moving speech.

A year previously there had been a banquet to Jack Squire, when 500 guests came together to do him honour. I was present, too, at a dinner given by members of the Athenaeum to Lord Baldwin, on his retirement from political life, when Lord Macmillan presided over a brilliant company. It being understood that no report was to be made, Lord Baldwin gave a brief survey of his parliamentary career, dwelling in particular on his relation with the Labour Party, relations which showed his tolerant statesmanship at its best. I had a few words with him after the dinner, when he said that on no occasion had he been so moved. No wonder, I told him, for he must have felt the sense of deep regard and affection extended to him by all present, irrespective of Party.

I like these occasions when men meet together to cheer with warmth and affection a living contemporary. I could

*The poetry
of beauty*

not manage to go to Dublin, as I would have wished, to join Masefield in paying tribute to Yeats on his seventieth birthday, but I went to a matinée when Nancy Price staged three of Yeats's plays, and was shocked to find the small theatre almost empty. A beautiful performance was given of one of his plays, *The Player Queen*, Joan Maude playing the Player Queen and Margot Ruddock the true Queen. Yeats would have preferred the parts reversed; but I thought Joan Maude's interpretation of the character exquisite; she had the beauty of diction and was herself the very poetry of beauty and wantonness. I had seen her as Katherine in *The Rose without a Thorn*, when she seemed to have the makings of a great actress. But she was divided between love for the stage and love for life. With her rich temperament, her intelligence and rare beauty, she had as much to give off the stage as on it; perhaps she was too generous with herself to make the complete sacrifice which an art demands.

I doubt whether great beauty is a fortunate asset for an actress. A delicate finish of feature is less effective on the stage than less perfect form; while the poetry of beauty may assume the place of the poetry of art. In the English theatre physical attractiveness is more in evidence than temperament; when we direct our opera glasses on to the stage and discover, in a player, the appearance of youth and beauty to be no illusion, we are by no means displeased. But a true actress can give the charm of youth when the part demands it, through her powers as a player. I lately saw Irene Vanbrugh play Rosalind in Barrie's comedy; she played the part of the middle-aged actress with rare charm and humour, and when she reappeared as her younger self, the self with whom the youngster had fallen so fiercely in love, it was with all the radiance of youth. For one who was celebrating her fiftieth year on the stage, this was no small triumph!

I saw, too, a remarkable performance of *Mourning becomes Electra*, when Miss Beatrix Lehmann, as Vinny, at first hard, bitter and unyielding, became the radiant, Rossetti-

like beauty, the very symbol of warm youthfulness, to wring one's heart by her mournful fate.

*The rise of
a poetess*

It was at the Eddie Marsh dinner that I met Ruth Pitter. Many think of a poet as of someone dreamy and impractical. Ruth has the beauty of vision and the material energy of a St. Teresa. Born in an unromantic suburb it was a fortunate event for Ruth when her parents rented a primitive tumble-down cottage deep in the forest—Hainoult forest—where was neither road nor water supply. But there was a garden wherein at times Ruth was surprised by an emotion of felicity so strong as to move her to tears. Her development as a poet was steady but slow. For her provenance was narrow, her education scant and uncongenial and her nature tended to reject help and advice. Her first poems appeared in the *New Age*, then edited by A. N. Orage. Orage and his circle were for long her only contact with living literature. Then came a book, *First Poems*, which appeared in 1920. Though many of the poems therein were amateurish, their technical skill won the admiration of Hilaire Belloc who later had printed, at his own expense—I love these generousities of artist to artist—*First and Second Poems* and again a long poem, *Persephone in Hades*. She came to her own in a sudden outpouring of satirical and grotesque poems, *A Mad Lady's Garland*. Two years later came *A Trophy of Arms* which gained for her the award of the Hawthornden Prize. In his preface for this book James Stephens claimed for her the second place, after Yeats, among living English poets.

But poetry does not provide even a bare living. Ruth and her friend Kate O'Hara were hard put to it for sustenance, but chance gave them a studio in Chelsea, wherein a similar business to that in which they had been employed—painting furniture and various small objects—was carried on. From 8.30 in the morning until midnight the two friends worked at their painting, helped by a single assistant, living on odds and ends as women can, and slowly built up a successful business. Now they employ a dozen girls.

*Gifted
women*

The forms and colours of flowers Ruth knows by heart. To be with her in the country is a delight, a gain in knowledge—not of flowers alone, for on most subjects Ruth has something pregnant to say. Since she can earn a living by her flower painting, she need not look to her writing for a livelihood. Her friend speaks of Ruth's loving and frugal care of any plant, of the vine especially, the vine with its beauty at every stage and in every detail, its vigour and mystical associations and its fruit—so varied, so blessed for its gift of wine.

What wealth we possess in our women writers! Some of the most gifted living painters, too, are women. Of Gwen John's exquisite work I have seen nothing for some years, and too seldom the spirited drawings of Edna Clark Hall; but Ethel Walker is a prolific artist, one of the rare painters who can give grace and character to her women sitters. It is a comfort each year in the Academy, among the vulgar presentments of the sex, to come on Ethel's sensitive paintings. It pleased me once, on a painters' varnishing day, to salute her with a kiss before the artists, men and women, searching for their pictures, most of them better hung, but few of the quality of Ethel's. Ethel lives and works in a drab house at the far end of Cheyne Walk; her painting room is cluttered up with canvases, Victorian bric-à-brac and the materials of her trade, with half a dozen dogs occupying chairs and sofa. Her industry is alarming; for a visitor she pulls out canvas after canvas, each completed in a sitting or two (for Ethel, like Sickert, does not repaint), paintings of young girls, flowers and the sea; and she drags out large decorative canvases, reminiscent of a mystic, spice-scented India. Before this parade of canvases, you have Ethel herself to share your admiration.

There is another Ethel, too, of whose music I can know nothing; but whose vigorous character and brilliant writings delight me—Ethel Smyth. If her music embodies the essence of her personality and the quality of her writings, it should be remarkable.

One day I found Yeats, now frequently in London, sitting before a table piled up with books; he was making an anthology of modern poetry for the Oxford Press, and reading contemporary poetry. There was one outstanding poet, he said, hitherto unknown to him, Dorothy Wellesley. Did I know anything about her?

Yes, indeed I knew her; some ten years earlier she had asked me to paint her two children, a project which, owing to illness, I had to abandon. I wrote to tell her of Yeats's high praise, knowing it would please her; for though Squire had long admired her work and printed her poems in *The London Mercury*, she had met with little recognition: maybe her title stood in the way. Now Yeats was to give her work an important place in his anthology. I joined him at 'Penns in the rocks', her home in Sussex, and sketched the two as they sat in the garden, the young and the elder poet; Dorothy slight, fair, with deep violet eyes and auburn hair, with full arched lips somewhat drawn down, a slight Elizabethan figure next to Yeats, dressed in crimson shirt, flowing coloured tie, now in his later years brown-skinned under his crown of white hair, his dark eyes aslant, broad-shouldered and ample of form—he once so pale and lanky. He read from the books before him with his musical lilting voice, accepting this poem, rejecting that. And after dinner Yeats would expand, talking as only the Irish can, of mystic experiences, deploring the loss of the ancient wisdom, praising the old secret knowledge handed on by word of mouth to the instructed. Speaking of death he referred to a phrase in the Upanishads: 'If you would know death, look into your own mind.' And he went on to tell of a visit to Gogarty, lying dangerously ill from poisoning, when Gogarty spoke of what he had been through: 'The pain was so great I had thought death would be an insufficient narcotic!' In Ireland to-day Yeats found the quickest understanding among gunmen; with these he could exchange ideas. But little of the old poetry still lingered among the people; in future he would write ballads to be sung in the streets, ballads set to new

Music and song tunes, if musicians would make them. For poetry should be said to music again, as it was by the Troubadours, and the old Irish poets. In fact he had already started such ballads: 'a series of twelve numbers by contemporary poets Irish and English, if I may call my contemporary York Powell a contemporary poet.' I told him how a friend had heard, in the north of England, a countryman singing at his plough—he remembered four lines only, which I thought strangely moving:

Heavy my feet are with the clods of soil,
Cold my hands are with the falling rain,
From the shining backs of the horses rises the steam,
Sing O, O, O, for November.

I told them, too, of Joseph Wells of Bampton in Oxfordshire, a Morris dancer, who sings local folk songs, playing the tunes on his fiddle, as did his father and grandfather before him.

Neither Yeats nor Dorothy knew much of the English folk songs, and I promised that my daughter Rachel should come down to sing for them such songs as *Nottamun Town*, which Cecil Sharp heard sung in the remote Appalachian Mountains. I sent the haunting words of *Nottamun Town* to Yeats and Dorothy Wellesley:

In Nottamun Town not a soul would look up,
Not a soul would look up, not a soul would look down,
Not a soul would look up, not a soul would look down
To tell me the way to Nottamun Town.

I rode a big horse that was called a grey mare,
Grey mane and tail, grey stripes down his back,
Grey mane and tail, grey stripes down his back,
There weren't a hair on him what was called black.

She stood so still, she threw me to the dirt,
She tore my hide and bruised my shirt;
From stirrup to stirrup I mounted again
And on my ten toes I rode over the plain.



W. P. Taylor 1920

MORRIS DANCER FROM BAMPTON,
OXFORDSHIRE

Met the King and the Queen and a company of men
A-walking behind and a-riding before.
A stark-naked drummer came walking along
With his hands in his bosom a-beating his drum.

*The
essence
of poetry*

Sat down on a hot and cold frozen stone,
Ten thousand stood round me yet I was alone.
Took my heart in my hand to keep my head warm.
Ten thousand got drowned that never were born.

'I do not understand the strange ballad you sent me,' wrote Dorothy, 'I get the sense of something very old, of which the story has been lost and haunting beauty alone remains. Much of it must be lost? Do you know anything of its origin?'

No, I have asked my musical friends but no explanation of the strange words has been forthcoming, nor could Yeats throw any light on them. I sent a copy of the song to Masefield, who replied: 'Many thanks for the song. The tune is a fine late Tudor thing. The words seem to be seventeenth century, with much later degradation. Please let me keep the page for a while, I will try to find an earlier version, in the meantime by all means let us think it is magic, not nonsense.'

In talking of poetry Yeats said the upholders of free verse claimed that its form was, without restriction, accommodated to the matter. He took the opposite view: the essence of poetry is the outpouring of the personal into a static form (this he compared with the metaphysical antimony of the individual and the infinite—the many and the one) although the form could of course be changed and adapted. 'I am a traditionalist.' He cited Byron's '*So we'll go no more a-roving*' where he relates his personal feelings, not only to traditional words, and metre, but on to an old quotation, and thus gives it 'far more melancholy'. Here lay the difference between his own early and later poetry—in his later he had a philosophy. Not that he writes philosophical poetry, 'I do not write about ideas, I try to write about my emotions. But

A poet's home my philosophy prevents me from writing much that I might otherwise write about.'

Yeats agreed with me that the reaction against what is sane and traditional is tiresome. We have to accept the conditions we find at a given time in our lives; within their discipline we can still be free enough to be sincere and ourselves. Mere easy acceptance, of course, is a different matter: 'Wherever there is thought there is opposition; you cannot think in vacuo.' But an easy, conventional reactiveness is merely negative opposition. It is a danger to which clever young people are particularly exposed; I know how easy this opposition is for those who, like myself, were brought up in a provincial town, where to react against the indifference and materialism one meets with is inevitable.

Dorothy Wellesley's was an inspiring house to stay in—a late seventeenth-century mansion of coloured brick with stone enrichments, it had belonged to William Penn. Within, while much of its original character has been preserved, the house has been adapted to the needs of a cultured woman. In the entrance hall and dining room are painted decorations by Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell. In other rooms hang baroque paintings acquired in Italy, while the library again is divided between contemporary poets and authors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these last in warm golden leather bindings, among them some curiosities of erotic literature.

The house lies in a quiet pastoral landscape. But close by, in strange contrast with the friendly, sun-warmed brick front, stand massive rocks, and to walk within the circle of these rocks, carved by the ages into shapes which suggest huge Aztec forms, is to enter a primeval world. Great trees grow among them, some with smooth dragonlike roots, creeping over the bare rocks, and under the thick leafage, and among them, fantastic branches; the air, the colour, the forms, seem to belong to ages far removed in time from the pleasant landscape beyond, into which, from the deep shade, one emerges into sunlit lawns and gardens.

Dorothy, like Ruth Pitter, knows and loves her flowers; and flowers respond to those who tend them with skill and delight, and, like fair women, look the more radiant for love and understanding. *Conversation of women*

Besides her poetry, Dorothy Wellesley has published a biography of Sir George Goldie. Writing of the difficulty of remembering the talk of her poet friends, she said, 'My book on Goldie was built up upon a young and ardent memory. I had only to speak with older people who knew Goldie (some twelve years later, after the book was published, my step-father¹ was one) to realise that my memory of him and his talk was accurate. But then Goldie had a wonderful gift, the gift Queen Elizabeth had: that of short incisive phrase. With Aristotle he believed that we should think like the wise man and speak like the people. But this was advice to poets. Goldie was a poet—and I believe him to have been the greatest man (taking all in all) that I have ever known.'

Again, like Ruth Pitter, Dorothy Wellesley's talk stirs with its wisdom and just perceptions. I understood Yeats when he said he could best talk with women, a somewhat vain thing to say, unless he include the women's part. But Yeats was self-centred; I wonder how much he saw, how much he heard of those with whom he sits. If Homer was blind, Yeats was short-sighted; nor is his ear quick to hear the lark or the nightingale, but rather mystic voices from within. A wonderful companion; but not many would have called him companionable!

After great periods of energy, artists and writers leave the broad highway, too encumbered with traffic, for unfrequented lanes. Of 'the nineteenth century and after', Yeats wrote:

Though the great song return no more
There's keen delight in what we have:
The rattle of pebbles on the shore
Under the receding wave.

The time must come again when there will be a subject

¹ Lord Scarborough.

*Artist and
subject-
matter*

matter of moment to artist and public. I say of moment, for I do not count the made-up picture, like the made-up play which was, and is still, popular among people of easy and uncritical acceptance. Yeats, speaking of painting, quoted his brother Jack as saying he painted to please himself and that the public chose to pay him. This was not Yeats's attitude to poetry: 'You must remember your audience, it is always there, you cannot write without it.'

The weakness of the modern idiom lies in this, that where there is neither fancy, novelty nor wit, there is wanting a solid basis which might still justify a limited objective. In impressionism and representative painting there is at least the unfailing inspiration, the unlimited design and variety of nature to fall back upon; hence, in spite of the contempt expressed by the literati for representative painting, it is likely to survive abstract and stylistic experiment.

No wonder an old man like Thomas Hardy wrote to me, 'I have lost the sense of pictorial art now a day, rather puzzled at its drift, I don't suppose I shall ever catch up again.'

Yet all the arts which cater directly for the theatre, for instance, for advertisement, book illustration, are brilliantly alive, and are rightly coloured by the prevalent fashions. Herein the fertile artists of Paris excel; they provide an unfailing source of inspiration for the minor arts. In Russia and in Germany the State recognizes the usefulness of the artist as advertiser, not so much of their manufactures, as of their ruthless might. We may look to get from Germany or Russia a powerful and cruel art like that of the Assyrians, glorifying the power of the Dictator, advertising the remorseless treatment to be meted out to his enemies.

If ever the Fascist party should come into power in England, I imagine Wyndham Lewis as the chief State artist; as Poet Laureate, Ezra Pound.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON NATIVE ART

BEING present at a musical festival at Stinchcombe, where village choirs sang with great zest and enjoyment, competing for the holding of banners and cups, I wondered whether there remained among the villages any talent for setting a song to music. I had heard often that Gloucestershire was regarded as a musical country; and being called on to speak I offered to provide a cup for a poem by Masfield or Davies.

Responsibilities towards native culture

It was disappointing to learn the following year there had been no response. Nothing remains of folk art in England; it lingered in Germany, Russia and Eastern Europe and has died with the century. One must travel as far as Bali, it appears, to find a live folk art. Now an influx of tourists is likely to smother it.

I have already referred to Marshal Lyautey's care for the Moroccan craftsmen. The responsibility for good government with us does not, it appears, extend to the area of native culture.

During my time at the Board of Education I helped to select men for posts as art masters in the British dependencies and was depressed by the quality of the candidates, mostly men who could find no work at home. If local traditions are allowed to decay, at least the worthier elements of European culture should be substituted, and not the vulgar ones; that should be a part of our responsibilities in administering the affairs of other races. Able and inspiring men should be chosen to go out to Africa and elsewhere, who should be

directly under the Directors of Education, and be allowed access to the Governor to advise and report. I put this strongly before Ormsby-Gore, who responded sympathetically, and since he proposed to visit some of the African colonies, he promised to enquire into the cultural side of the administration. I also proposed to the Board of Education that a small section at the Royal College be reserved for men endowed with the necessary vision for special service abroad.

Later I discovered that at Achimote an able artist from the Slade School, G. A. Stevens, was devoting himself to encouraging native African talent. A committee was set up by Ormsby-Gore after his return from Africa to advise on the preservation of native art and industries in Nigeria, and a book on the arts of West Africa, edited by Sir Michael Sadler, for which I wrote an introduction, was published under their authority. Since then I have seen many examples of African work, in carving and other crafts, which show a natural sense of form and design, a precious asset of the country which should be encouraged and preserved. The British officials do not always show sufficient awareness of the value of indigenous art, or of their paramount responsibility towards the people for whose benefit they administer. A vigorous policy in support of the things that belong to the higher nature of man should be one of the important objects of administration. The Germans are in this direction keener, more alive to the 'museum value' of indigenous art than our administrators. But I gathered from my cousin, Edward Falk, who has spent a great part of his life in Nigeria, that the humanity of the German officials in their dealing with the Africans left much to be desired. But then their treatment of their own fellow citizens is shocking enough.

One day there came Adolf Schott, my doctor from Nauheim, in great trouble. It looked as though there was to be a general attack on the Jews in Germany. Their lives could be made intolerable. He wanted my advice, whether he should remain at Nauheim or leave Germany, but I was not in the

position to advise him on so serious a matter; had not his father and his uncle created Nauheim? To give up his work in continuance of theirs seemed on the face of it unwise. I could not but believe, too, that this wave of anti-semitism would pass. But Schott was doubtful. There were signs which seemed to him ominous. But he would wait and see how things developed. Not long afterwards he returned to England, this time determined to take an English medical degree in case life became intolerable for Jews in Germany. Only later did I realize the rightness of his decision. But at the time it was impossible to imagine that so civilized and enlightened a country as Germany could so fall from all sense of justice and honour.

*A doctor in
trouble*

CHAPTER XXVIII

FAREWELL TO LAWRENCE

*Hosts and
guests*

WHAT disputations we had with my sons and their friends! My sons' ideas on painting, on social questions were, naturally, more advanced than my own. I was, moreover, ignorant of the psycho-analytical theories with which they were much occupied. While I thought them prone to theorizing, they accused me of generalizing. There was an old jest of Max Beerbohm's which they would repeat:

'How do you do?' Will asked of me.

'Very well, thanks,' said I. Said he,

'Yes, I invariably find

Abundant health in all mankind.'

Next morning, 'How d'you do?' asked Will.

I told him I was rather ill.

'Alas,' his voice tolled like a bell,

'Mankind was ever far from well.'

These lines were written when we played parlour games with pen and pencil. Max and Ellis Roberts are masters at improvisation. Ellis would read out our composite verses with sonorous voice and rolling eye, adding thereby to the uproarious hilarity. We also played heads, bodies and legs. Artists and non-artists together produce astonishing surrealist evocations, and some, especially when ladies join in the game, of an indecency! The Roberts's readiness to join in any fun is at one with their readiness to give their purses, their time and understanding to their friends, to those in need.

Max wrote that there are born hosts and born guests. Ellis and Harriet Roberts shine equally as hosts and as guests.

There are some again, who habitually keep their friends to themselves. The Roberts are generous with their friends as with all else. In their panelled room at Lincoln's Inn, at the table whose polished surface reflects back glass, silver, china and flowers (always exquisitely arranged by their maid) with redoubled brilliance, wine, food and company, combined with Ellis's Johnsonian presence, are at their most stimulating; and Ellis's wit! upon someone expressing surprise that X, a notorious snob, should have married his cook, Ellis remarked: But of course! she can get him an entrée anywhere. Ellis and Harriet Roberts will not only help lame dogs over stiles, but in their joyous company dogs will bound over the highest gates and hedges. And what an excellent critic is Ellis Roberts! Like Desmond MacCarthy he brings an impartial critical faculty to bear on contemporary writers 'as though he were considering a classic'.

Ellis Roberts, like James Stephens, places Leo Myers' *Root and the Flower* above any contemporary work of fiction. Myers is a lonely figure. Sensitive, fastidious and aloof, he has forced himself to look on the brutish elements of life, to acknowledge the bitter sequence of events which men's short memories allow them to gloss over. He knows that in the midst of our dilemmas, dilemmas we must honestly attempt to meet before they overwhelm us, we can only depend on our individual spiritual integrity. 'If war should come,' he said to my younger son, 'you must make up your mind now, whether to fight or emigrate, to be a conscientious objector or to join the Quakers; only don't let yourself be caught in the sudden whirlwind.'

No one would suspect, finding Leo Myers so reticently correct in his bearing, so fastidiously dressed, the feelings which burn within him against the unquestioned acceptance of the material advantages which wealth and hereditary birth bring to individuals and their families.

Hudson once wrote of the great trees under whose shadow nothing wholesome could grow. So Myers is a fierce opponent of a privileged class, recognizing the charm of true

*A French
historian of
England*

breeding, its apparent humanism, but holding once its security is threatened, these qualities to be but skin deep. Indeed he never hesitates to state his opinions before his many friends who belong to the favoured circles, that his sympathies lie, not with them and their admittedly attractive ways of living, but with those who suffer from the hideous discrepancies of an ill-planned community. Yet I could not easily see Leo Myers in a coarse or rough environment: Nor would he pretend to be at ease therein!

St John Gogarty is another writer whose work delights me, as different in subject and attitude from Myers as it is possible to be. Like Yeats, Gogarty is an intellectual aristocrat, an Irishman glorying in the Aristophanic spirit—of which, indeed, he has a noble portion—who yet wishes ‘not to vary from the kindly race of men’. There are pages in *As I was going down Sackville Street* and *Tumbling in the Hay* which have the high Irish pride of wit, a splendid zest for life. Gogarty has a genial toleration of barmen, drunkards and whores, unrelated to the more conventional Left-wing sympathy with the bottom dog: ‘Though you are a fool and a knave you shall eat.’

An aristocratic spirit will show itself under any shape social life may take. Indeed, that is precisely what has happened in the past. When a civilization has been overwhelmed by a ruder race, a new refinement has taken root and flowered. But the glaring contrast between extreme wealth and extreme poverty in London continually strikes foreigners. Elie Halévy was the more surprised at the moderation of the views and actions of the working classes compared with those on the Continent. The standards which the Trade Unions have won for their members in England are in advance of those which prevail in France. Moreover there is among their leaders generally a steady opposition to violent change. For they know that at such a time the saner influences are submerged, first by outbreaks of criminal rascality, then, when some kind of order has been restored, by the more ruthless advocates of revolutionary methods. Halévy was a



LEO MYERS

keen observer of English life, a staunch admirer of the English character. As a Frenchman he could regard our institutions from unusual angles, and thus give an unfamiliar perspective to English history. Halévy came each summer with his wife to work at the British Museum. In him one met with the best type of French mind, clear, searching, enlightened, and with an integrity proof against self-deception.

Proof against self-deception, a quality of André Gide and Denis Saurat, of the French perhaps. A group, talking after luncheon at the French Embassy of the growing co-operation between France and England, Roland de Margerie said simply, it was now a necessity, without it both England and France would go down.

Denis Saurat likewise approaches English literature as Halévy comes to its history, with an ingenuous and ripe intelligence. Talking with these men I get a nostalgia for France, too long unvisited.

I had an odd reminder of my early days there. A young student at University College in London, Vernon Underwood, engaged on a thesis on Verlaine for a doctorate in literature, came to talk of the poet and to look through the letters I had from him. He was limiting his thesis to Verlaine's early experiences in England and spared no pains in making researches. He went to Paris to study collections of letters and documents relating to Verlaine, and among others he came upon three letters sent by me to the poet. In one of these, written from Chelsea in 1895, there is an amusing reference to Alphonse Daudet's vagueness about English history; half a century ago most French writers were still strangers to the cosmopolitanism which has since that time infected France:

Cher ami, en revenant hier d'Oxford je trouve une masse de lettres—parmi lesquelles celles-ci que je vous renvoie, non pas à cause du style, mais uniquement pour vous montrer que je ne suis pas l'ingrat que vous devez me penser, de ne pas vous avoir remercié pour votre lettre. Powell¹ va on

¹ Frederick York Powell, Regius Professor of History at Oxford.

Rimbaud
in
Abyssinia

ne peut mieux—très gai d'ailleurs et très content de sa position de Professeur. Nous avons beaucoup causé de vous—il m'a raconté des choses très drôles sur la visite de la famille Daudet à Oxford—on a montré des parties de Christ Church que le Cardinal Wolsey a fait construire—'ah oui, le chancelier de Georges trois!' a remarqué le poète. Je vous serre bien cordialement la main. Donnez-moi bientôt de vos nouvelles—affectueusement,

WILL ROTHENSTEIN.

I was further reminded of Verlaine by Enid Starkie's books on Arthur Rimbaud, which give a powerful presentment of Verlaine's sinister, uncouth and morally unsettling companion. When I first heard talk of Rimbaud in Paris, this would be in 1889, there was mystery and speculation about his later years. He had disappeared into Abyssinia where it was imagined he was leading an adventurous buccaneering life. Of his misery there, of the failure of his enterprises nothing was known. It was through Sir Stephen Gaselee that Enid Starkie was able to examine the files of the Foreign Office in which were references to Rimbaud's activities in Abyssinia. 'The sad thing is', wrote Enid, 'that since writing my little *Rimbaud in Abyssinia* I have got access to all the papers belonging to the Rimbaud family. The bulk of them relate to his ten years in Abyssinia and would have made my book far more interesting although they would not have changed my views. I saw all the letters to Rimbaud from his business acquaintances in Abyssinia, from all his partners, all the accounts. There is further conclusive proof that he was implicated in the slave traffic, for I saw a letter to him from Menelek's Swiss engineer, Ilg, refusing to provide him with slaves for sale. I have far too much material to use in my big Rimbaud though I have some other interesting material for that too.' Of her final book on Rimbaud, Denis Saurat remarked it was the best written work by an English writer (Enid is of course Irish) on a French poet. No mean praise.

Verlaine's poetry still gives me abounding pleasure. It is so *readable*. I get similar pleasure from Conder's paintings:



ELIE HALEVY

they are so attractive to look at. Both Verlaine and Conder have a quality which appeals equally to the fastidious and to those not usually sensitive to poetry and painting. The illustrators of the thirties in Germany, and the sixties in England, have a similar attraction. Perhaps the most classic examples are Dr Hoffmann's *Struwelpeter*, and Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*. Mackail drew my attention to a popular illustrated edition of Bunyan's *Progress*, published by Samuel Bagster in 1845. The tiny woodcuts, exquisitely designed, might have been drawn and engraved by de la Mare's 'Midget'.

There are some excellent book illustrators to-day, whose work is likely to have permanent value. After his adventurous use of living artists for his *Seven Pillars*, I wondered that Lawrence did not get the pictures for his translation of the *Odyssey* made likewise by some gifted contemporary. I was disappointed with his translation. So apparently was Lawrence. He had been disappointed by the Greek original, for he wrote in answer to some observations I made: 'Homer? a pot boiler, long ago done with. When, or if it will be published, is not my concern. The Greek isn't good I fancy; and my version is frankly poor. Thin, arty, self-conscious stuff, the *Odyssey*. I believe the *Iliad* to be a great poem—a bare fragment of a great poem embedded in it, rather. But the *Odyssey* is pastiche and face powder.' I asked him later, why then did he choose to spend long hours in translating the *Odyssey*? It was a job for which he was to be well paid, he said, and he needed money; and he liked Bruce Rogers printing. We have all, at times, to accept unpalatable work, to do it as best we can—no one knows this better than a portrait painter. Only anything Lawrence chose to do would be grist to a publisher's mill. Maybe it is simpler to do what one is asked; maybe not until he was deep in his translation did Lawrence discover the *Odyssey* to be 'pastiche and face powder'. 'What a strange thing', Max Beerbohm wrote, 'to be a super-eminent genius and hero, as Lawrence was, plus such streaks of sheer silliness (e.g. the

Farewell to Manning marginless reproductions, and the excuse for them; and the view of the *Odyssey*; and the translation of it . . . I have read various extracts from that translation—read them with gasps. And I would rather not have been that translator than have driven the Turks out of Arabia.’

Alas, this was to be Lawrence’s last published work. Manning again, whom Lawrence so much admired, was not destined to finish the prose work on which he had been working fitfully. I was away the week-end of Feb. 22nd. Returning from the country on the Tuesday, I was shocked to hear from my wife that Manning had died on the previous Friday. No notice of his death had appeared in the press. I at once telephoned through to *The Times*, and dictated a brief account of Manning to appear therein, and telegraphed and wrote to Lawrence, urging him to supplement this with some words of his own. From Lawrence came no response. T. S. Eliot, alone among writers, came to Manning’s interment. Lady Manning, stricken with grief at her beloved son’s death, was hurt at Lawrence’s silence, for she knew of the friendship between the two, and I wrote again begging him to write to her. Then came the following letter, from Clouds Hill, dated 5th May, 1935:

Dear W. R.,

Manning died as I was on my way to Bourne to visit him. I turned off and rode down here. Your two letters came. Between them I had to go to London and called at Airlie Gardens; vainly as usual. I suppose you are still chained to your College. Now Mrs Hardy has sent me your last note. I am sorry to appear so remiss; but my discharge from the R.A.F. (which had to come) has rather done me in, so that I no longer have the mind or wish to do anything at all. I just sit here in this cottage and wonder about nothing in general. Comfort is a poor state after busyness.

As for Manning, I cannot say how sad the news made me. He was a lovely person, and it is hateful to see him go out, unfinished. But gone he very definitely is. It makes one feel as

though nothing can matter much. If I come to London again soon I shall ring your bell once more. Patience will tell in the end. Only I do not expect to come up yet awhile.

Yours,

T. E. SHAW.

*A great
nature
thwarted*

Alas, a few weeks later Lawrence himself went out, he too unfinished. There was something prophetic in the tone of this, the last letter I had from him—'I no longer have the mind or wish to do anything at all. Comfort is a poor state after busyness.' What Lawrence would have done no one can guess. What he did the whole world knows. He, too, was a 'lovely person'; those who could claim his friendship knew what they had lost.

Lawrence is perhaps destined to become a symbolic figure. For which of us is certain of the right way to take in life? How many, disappointed and perplexed, would welcome retreat, if only for a time, from their dilemmas. After his Arab campaign, Lawrence became almost a legendary person, yet the campaign which gained him renown was to him a source of bitterness. Success! a word, an abstraction; there was no such thing. He had lent his brain and his strength to something that needed doing; the doing was a pain; and he knew the filth, moral and physical, associated with war.

On me he made the impresson of a thwarted nature, a great spirit in doubt as to his aim and purpose. He went as a private into the Air Force as he might, in another age, have entered a monastery. Yet while serving, both in the Air Force and the Tank Corps, he was preoccupied with an urge for writing, and punished himself, unknowingly maybe, by denying his own instincts.¹ Or perhaps he shirked the immense effort required to produce great literature. Action had called on the whole man; to action he had given all his resources, mental and physical, to the point of exhaustion. Only writing would call for an equal effort; he toyed with the idea but funked the complete sacrifice. In a note I wrote

¹ Since writing this I have found, from the volume of his letters, that he did write: an account of the Air Force, *The Mint*.

*A dedica-
tion at
St. Paul's* for the book *Lawrence and His Friends*, I tried to sum up my impressions of this complex character.

We went to St. Paul's for the dedication of Kennington's bronze bust of Lawrence, when Lord Halifax made a noble oration, before we descended to the crypt where the bust was placed. Kennington himself in the lightest of clothes was noticeable among the dark clad rows of men and women.

I thought of the bitter things Lawrence had written about the service over Hardy's remains in the Abbey; but of Lord Halifax's presence, a layman's, in the pulpit he would not have disapproved. Nor would he have disapproved of the service at the Abbey on Lord Allenby's death; for Lord Allenby was the very type of Christian soldier, upright, forthright, strong and gentle at the same time. The impassive dignity with which Lady Allenby, walking alone behind her husband's bier as it passed down the nave, made an unforgettable impression upon my wife and myself. It is easy to understand Lawrence's devotion to such a man among men, as was Allenby. Alas, I was reaching the age of adieus; the more need for cherishing the qualities of the living.

Kennington was devoting himself to Lawrence's glorification—for him Lawrence was the perfect man, who could do no wrong. The stone carvings I saw at his country studio were all inspired by his hero. It is good for an artist, for a sculptor especially, to have a strong motive for his work. Sculptors themselves rarely believe in the worth of their themes; the convention of not meaning that which they say has been too constant to be overcome by any but a few isolated men. How many memorials of the war, for instance, have meaning? Yet here was an occasion for depth of feeling and sincerity, which English painters, on the other hand, did not miss. Eric Gill has written wisely on the sculptor's task, and his war memorial at Leeds University, showing Christ driving the money-lenders from the Temple, has conviction and style. Later he has become mannered and his refined craftsmanship is scarcely calculated to withstand the disintegrating wear of time and weather.

CHAPTER XXIX

A LETTER FROM RAMSAY MACDONALD

I HAPPENED to be calling at 10 Downing Street at a moment of crisis in Ramsay MacDonald's career. This was in August 1931; he was about to go to Buckingham Palace to see the King. In what capacity he would return, he said, he did not know. He came back as Prime Minister, at the head of a government that was largely Conservative. I gathered from him that this was at the urgent demand of King George. He had long been unpopular with his own party. Now he was to incur their bitter hatred. A part of this hatred was to be shared for a space by his son Malcolm. But Malcolm's marked ability, his honesty and modesty, have brought him the respect of all parties. When, after his father's death, I suggested he should carry on his father's association with the Athenaeum, I wrote to Lord Baldwin to ask him to propose Malcolm for membership. Lord Baldwin at once assented, 'Malcolm is of the salt of the earth.'

*Downing
Street and
Lossie-
mouth*

It was apparent that the long strain of office during one crisis after another was telling on MacDonald. I was always glad when I knew him to be in the calmer atmosphere of Lossiemouth. 'I am having a very quiet time with plenty of ordinary work, but most gorgeous weather,' he wrote from there. 'When you want clear skies and balmy air with just an edge on it, you have to come to spend Christmas up here.' But even there the solitude he had known was being disturbed. He wrote from Lossiemouth during December 1935:

My dear Rothenstein,

Thank you so much for your letter, which brings me not

*Death of
Drink-
water* merely to your door but to your fireside, and consequently gives me special pleasure. I am afraid that up here the hand of the soulless vandal is more evident than that of the craftsman.

This Christmas unfortunately has had much of its spirit knocked out of it by worldly affairs, and I have had to regret that the world is too much with me. Still, much of this will pass and the influence of a few good friends is wonderfully sweetening.

I should be very glad indeed to repeat that Sunday evening with your folks and Max's, and I hope it will happen when I return to London in about a fortnight's time.

With my best New Year's wishes to your wife and yourself believe me to be yours always sincerely,

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

Ramsay found solace, too, in early morning walks on Hampstead Heath, where he was often joined by his friends, among others by John Drinkwater, who lived at Highgate in a large house, with a garden of five acres, at the far end of the Heath. But the upkeep of house and garden proved a burden and he later moved to less expensive, though scarcely less ample, premises. Since *Lincoln* no play of his had a like success, and the many books he wrote scarcely brought enough to provide for his generous ways of living. Moreover, as a representative figure in the literary world, he accepted many invitations to speak at various anniversaries both at home and abroad, even flying to Persia and back, and thus overtaxed his strength. The last time I saw him he stayed the night at Worcester College, where I was then painting, coming to Oxford for the annual supper of the O.U.D.S. from which he returned at four o'clock in the morning, going on early next day to speak at Cambridge. A few months later after following an exciting boat race in a launch on the river, he stayed late at a festive bump-supper, and was found dead in bed the next morning. His finances were found to be in a deplorable state. Ramsay MacDonald who had now resigned from the Lord Presidentship, interested himself in his affairs, and a civil list pension was

granted to his daughter Penelope Anne. MacDonald, in a letter from Lossiemouth, 2nd September, 1937, refers to John Drinkwater, to whom he was attached: *Radiant skies*

My dear Rothenstein,

I was so glad to see your hand-writing. Your cheery and newsy letter was also most pleasant.

We have a family party here now the holiday begins to end, and at the moment there is no one here except Ishbel. Malcolm went down to London via Invergordon yesterday but he meant to return to-night, as there is a big political demonstration in his Constituency.

I am glad that you have had your young people around you too. Your grandchildren appear to become as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore, but I suppose your wife and yourself give each of them a warm welcome.

If you want radiant skies in the morning or the evening you really must come here. The sunrise here this morning was one of the most beautiful displays of colour—indigo and red predominating—that even I have seen. If you sat at my bedroom window in the morning and walked up to the top of the hill in the evening you would see colours in the sky that I believe you have never seen before. If you painted them your friends would say that you had got another bee in your bonnet.

I am glad you have read Drinkwater's last book. I will tell you one day how he came to see me in Frogna on what turned out to be the last Sunday of his life. I have been working hard to get some money for his widow, and the £500 which the Royal Literary Society provided was a god-send. Have you any influence with Neville Chamberlain? I think, unless she finds it easier to make a living by her fiddle than she thinks is possible, she might well be entitled to a Civil List Pension. But it will need some recommending by influential people.

I have never come across Ruth Pitter's work, but on your warm recommendation I shall certainly have a look at it.

*The
kindness of
Graham*

I was very glad to have Tschiffely look in upon me with his wife and a Mrs Hunter with whom they were staying in Perthshire. You are quite right about the neglect of Graham. During the greater part of his life so few people understood him or would bear with him, but, when he carved his own name, the most respectable people were prepared to accept every whim. But Graham was a great man, a delightful fellow and a gallant gentleman, who possessed the most characteristic possession of a gay Cavalier—no money. I love a story that Tschiffely told me. Graham gave instructions as to what was to be carved on his tombstone. He ordered that his Coat of Arms should not appear but that under his name should be cut the brand which he put on his horses.

I agree with you as to the loss we have all suffered by the death of Halévy. They are all going one after another now. Soon I will be ashamed of hanging on so frantically to what after all is the wreck of a raft.

I am very much better but I would like to be a little fresher and more alive before I tackle that job to which you refer.¹ If I were like some of your old College Don Friends I could write with the thick brown ink of seventy years. Fisher could produce quite a nice history of his time in that way, but I cannot. The ink with which I write has got to have some colour in it, red for preference, certainly nothing duller than a filthy green.

I should like to have a week-end with you as you suggest, but I am afraid that I shall not be able to do so until after I return next March.

With kindest regards to you and Lady,

Yours always sincerely,

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

I never heard of that last visit of Drinkwater's to Frogna. MacDonald was wrong about Cunninghame Graham. Graham died a rich man. True when I first knew him he had an encumbered estate, but the sale of Gartmore left him in comfortable circumstances.

¹ His autobiography.

Cunninghame Graham had lately sent me a couple of his essays, one on a Spanish dancer, Aurora la Cujijñi, written round a print we found together in a shop in Spain, another on Bibi Carlton, an adventurous Englishman born in Morocco who helped us, together with Walter Harris, with equipment for our journey into the interior. Bibi was a character, 'the next best thing to a Moor,' who knew Morocco from Tangier to the Atlas Mountains, and engaged in many enterprises, open and illicit, up and down the country. He died in London, where Graham cheered his last hours. I wrote to Graham of his kindness to Bibi, reminding him of his kindness to me when a youngster, taking me with him as travelling companion on one of his journeys to Morocco and Spain. He replied:

79a *Elizabeth St.*,
May 4/33.

My dear Rothenstein,

I have been much touched by your letter and scarcely know what to answer, except that I am glad our friendship, established so long ago, on our memorable trip to Morocco, still endures as perfect as it was when you were young, and I was younger. You certainly were young—I can see you now on 'el Conejo' riding with Bibi (R.I.P.) and myself on the beach on the way to Arzila. I can't remember that you were 'priggish' and would not believe it, even if 'Franciscan Friars said it' as the phrase goes in Spanish. I am more than glad that my early writings have stood the test of time in the eyes of so good a judge as yourself and thank you once again for your affectionate letter. Walter Harris is to be buried to-day, I think. He died in Malta on a journey he should never have undertaken in his broken state of health. I was in Algenciras when he died and would have waited a week for his funeral but could not stay for a month. Walter died as he had lived 'travelling' and no doubt he would have wished it so.

Suyo amigo affmo.,
R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.

*Mac-
Donald's
last days*

Graham was nearing his eighties. Except that his hair was now grey and no longer stood up above his fine, narrow forehead, he looked more like Don Quixote than ever. He held his head high, his athletic figure was erect and slender, and he still walked with the swagger of the gaucho.

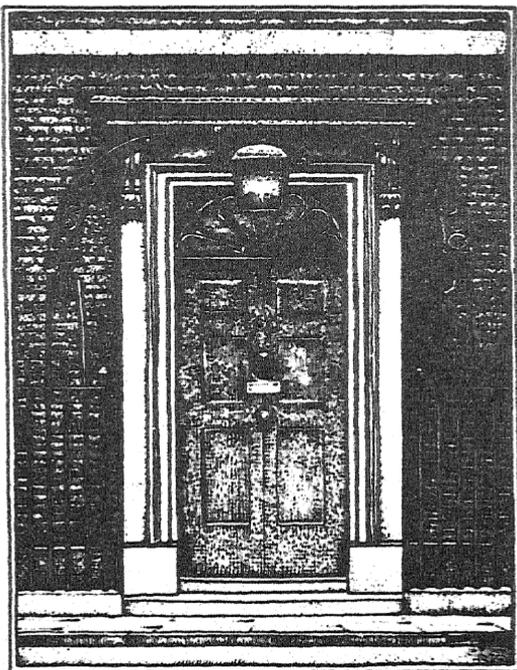
As a writer justice has not been done him. His gift for robust and picturesque epithet, his rich vocabulary remind me of Sir Thomas Urquhart's translations. Graham belonged to the rare company of eccentric Englishmen—or Scotchmen. He had affinities with Trelawney, Wilfred Blunt and, as an irresponsible parliamentarian, with Henry Labouchere. His friendship with Tschiffely came late in his life; Graham chose him to be his biographer, and gave him many details of his past life, of which Tschiffely made excellent use. It was his admiration for Tschiffely's great South American ride which brought the two lovers of horses together.

So George Moore chose Charles Morgan to be his future biographer. For long Morgan occupied himself with the project; but there were difficulties in the way of research into certain aspects of Moore's life. I thought that Morgan might restrict himself to writing an intensive study of the Moore he knew at Ebury Street in his later, riper years. No, either he would carry out Moore's wishes and write a full biography or he would give up the task.

MacDonald, in his letter, alluded to his intention, on his retirement from Parliament, of writing an autobiography, but he no longer had the energy for the task. Indeed his health was visibly failing. He decided to get away, to take a long sea voyage. He would visit South America. To his friends this scarcely seemed a wise choice. He would find it difficult to avoid notice, interviews with politicians and tiring functions; he needed complete rest. His daughter Sheila was to go with him; Sheila, like her sister Ishbel, avoided publicity whenever it was possible. She would watch over her father.

We went to bid goodbye to MacDonald a few days before he was to leave. He looked tired, as indeed he was; but he

LABORANTIBUS · PORTUS · ET
REFUGIUM · BIBLIOTHECA



PRIME MINISTER'S
LIBRARY

BOOK-PLATE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S
LIBRARY AT DOWNING STREET

pressed us and his friend Alec Martin to stay until his other visitors had left.

*Difficulties
of a Prime
Minister*

He wanted to show his latest treasures. He had spotted a painting at Christie's attributed to Hogarth, and as it was looked on with suspicion, he acquired it for a small sum. It turned out to be by the hand of Gavin Hamilton, whose works are rarely met with; so he had done well to buy it. He had recently been given a large painting by Gainsborough, a drawing for which he had found previously, of which he was justly proud. He was not to see these paintings again. My wife went to Victoria station, to join his family in bidding him a good journey. She was the last to shake hands with him as the train drew out. Three days later we read of his death on the voyage out.

Of MacDonald's place in the political history of our time it is too early for a reliable judgment. I only know how deeply he took to heart the bitterness and strife left as an aftermath of the war. I remember one of Max's cartoons showing MacDonald digging in his garden, looking up, to become suddenly aware of a great obstruction shutting out the sky, 'I never noticed that before.' We all read our daily papers with a complacency which would be shocking had the disasters of which we read occurred in our own circles. But a Prime Minister is closely affected by the most distant disturbances, and must make decisions likely to affect the lives of countless people for good or evil. I know from my own small experience as head of a public institution, what it means to have to say yea or nay. MacDonald had a tenderer hide, I think, than many politicians, and he suffered acutely from the conditions he had to face. It was for this reason that he valued private friendships; he could either unburden himself of some of the things that troubled him or, better still, refresh his spirit by closer proximity with realities removed from the platform or political arena. I have seen again and again how his natural blitheness could return, his sense of fun and the ludicrous be awakened, by congenial companionship. There was a largeness in his nature, expressed mater-

*Difficulties
of a Prime
Minister*

ially by the sonorous beauty of his voice, the ampleness of his gesture, the width and extent of his interests. He has often been accused by members of his own party of philandering with the rich and powerful. But intelligence and charm are to be found among men and women irrespective of their birth, their political bias, of their wealth or poverty. No one objected to Balfour's, Asquith's or Haldane's relations with men and women in every position of life. Balzac's idea of the final reward for a life of single-minded devotion to literature was the friendship of beautiful and highly bred women. The dog-in-the-manger attitude is an unpleasant one; and it has long been considered the glory of English politics that private friendships can exist side by side with political animosities.

CHAPTER XXX

FORM AND THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

BLANCHE had sent a young protégé, Francis Tailleux, to work for a time in my studio. In London at least students are taught drawing and construction, Blanche wrote; this was no longer the case in Paris. But to send over an intelligent young Frenchman after he has caught the prevailing infections which in Paris no one seems to escape, is like sending a patient to a specialist when his case is hopeless.

*Ripeness of
Sickert*

Tailleux was a charming fellow, intelligent, with attractive manners and a delicate sensibility. He returned more than once, for he had made many friends in London. Now he was to hold an exhibition of his paintings at the Leicester Galleries. Curious to see how he had developed, I went to his private view. In the next room Sickert was showing his latest work, and there, in the middle of the gallery was Walter himself. He had grown stouter since I last saw him, with generous stomach, and his genial bulk was emphasized by ample, loose-fitting clothes of bright orange-red cloth, and heavy boots. A thatch of grey beard covered the lower part of his face, and a fisherman's peaked cap fitted low over his eyes. He seemed delighted to see us; he had always been fond of my wife, and my relations with him had formerly been close and affectionate. We walked round with him and his wife and discussed the paintings.

I spoke of the number of works he now produced; how little I get through by comparison. 'Well, Billy, why don't you do as I do, take a few prints or snapshots, square them out—and the thing is done!' said Sickert. 'But, my dear Walter,' said I, '*I like doing it!*' At which Walter roared with

Articles of commerce laughter; then, always polite, at the request of a press photographer, he stood apart to be photographed.

Then we went off together to luncheon. We helped him into our car and out of it again, he playing the rôle of the centenarian. What would he have for lunch? Oysters and hock—he had no teeth, he explained. That he didn't mind; there was a more serious incapacity to attendant on age he regretted more! The years had not robbed him of his wit, or his gaiety. We drove him back to the gallery, where more photographers awaited him, and left him and his gifted wife with expressions of mutual satisfaction and the promise of an early visit to Broadstairs.

Sickert is a wit, a fine intelligence, a charmeur. He has a clear conception of his aims, of what it is within him to do. He has set himself a limited but consistent objective. Small canvases suit his methods and his vision. When he essays a more ambitious scale and subject he fails.

Walter's latest works are a witty commentary on the nineteenth century, on its charm and absurdities, on its art at once so enchanting and so blatant. His mind remains ever alert to see the possibility most artists neglect. Besides Victorian illustrations he uses the reproductions in the daily press for his recent paintings. But the enlargements he makes from photographs of his sitters, of actors and actresses especially, are scarcely worthy of him or of his subjects.

There is the example of a greater artist, Corot, who did superlatively good work at a time when it passed almost unnoticed. Corot's landscapes and figure pieces are among the masterpieces of French art; yet during the latter years of his life, he became famous for slight feathery landscapes, done with ease, without reference to nature, and largely (like Sickert) to supply the dealers, when 'Corots' had become articles of commerce. The dealers must have objects with which to deal; and if they take up an artist's work they need a constant supply of canvases.

If painters formerly worked for the Church and the State, they knew at least their work would have a permanent

place in chapel or palace, and must stand the scrutiny of more than a generation. Most paintings to-day are seen but once at one or other current exhibition, and generally return to the artists' studios, to be stacked against the walls; while books can be read and re-read at pleasure. And there are literary critics, writing with authority of an art they themselves practise. Who has written more delightfully on books in her *Common Reader* than Virginia Woolf? In answer to a letter in which I wrote gratefully of this book, she replied modestly: 'I always feel apologetic about publishing my own criticism, because I don't know that there is much excuse for adding to books about books, unless one has something like knowledge to impart. And that I have not. But I do claim to be a lover of reading and it is a great reward and encouragement to me if I can send a little shock across to you, who care so much about the other art. Why there aren't more critics of painting I can't make out. It must be easier with the picture in front of you—but there, too, I am very ignorant.' But do people who write about pictures write with the picture in front of them? Not often, I fancy. Yet whenever I go to a gallery I feel that the only way to appreciate and appraise a painting is to look at it, and to look long and patiently and often. There is no other way; a painting remembered is but a ghost. Relations of colour, of line, the treatment of subject, have their physical effect on the spectator. Indeed, on each visit to the National Gallery or the Tate, the paintings affect me differently.

But if a painting remembered is but a ghost, so, with me at least, is the recollection of a book long unread. To re-read is to realize how pale is my memory. I hear of gifted beings whose memories remain fresh and stable; who can quote long passages from novels and poems. I am not one of them; far from it. After reading a book I am full of it for a week or two, for a short space I know its contents as well as others with perfect memories. Perhaps a bad memory is not wholly disadvantageous; it allows, in the reading of poetry and prose, a constantly renewed pleasure.

In poetry as in painting, nothing is so new, so surprising, so original, as beauty itself. We neither want nor expect a new kind of blossom on pear, plum or apple tree. Each year the loveliness of the spring takes us by surprise, overwhelms us; the dark blue menace of the storm, against which trees and buildings show livid, brings a vague dread to the heart; and the delight when we awake to see the sheeted earth under snow, the ravishment of the painted autumn; these things are ever new! So what is ever new in art is a shining interpretation of what the eye sees, of that which the mind conceives. Given these, and it is of no moment when a work is done, this year or a century or more ago. If this year, there is the added pleasure of sharing the intuitions which gave it form.

Wisdom is wisdom and stupidity stupidity, whether it be said with a Cockney, a Mayfair, or an Oxford accent; so form is distinguished or trivial, whatever the fashion of the moment. I should be willing to forget comparison between the nineteenth-century artists and those of the present if, together with the accent, I could get an art as rich and complete as that of Millet and Daumier. I was recently speaking of Degas with Walter Bayes, an unusually intelligent artist whose critical insight I respect; Bayes compared Degas unfavourably with Sickert, holding Degas to be the cleverer, but Sickert the truer painter. This view astonished me; it was one I could not share. But I give this as an instance of the regard in which Sickert is held and of my own alienation from contemporary opinion.

So much contemporary painting and poetry needs explanation. But then, I reflect, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Jules Laforgue were not easy reading, and there were the symbolists, like Odilon Redon, who needed their interpreters too. With what contempt I viewed my elders in earlier days, when they challenged my, to them, equally incomprehensible idols!

Looking through a copy of *Signature* I came on a number of illustrations by Picasso, Bonnard, Dufy and Chagal for editions of French classics published by the genial and adven-

turous Ambroise Vollard, whose courage and faith in his contemporaries is so praiseworthy. Seeing these prints, adventures in style rather than illustrations, I wondered how much the spectator himself brings to enhance the effect of the work before him; a great deal, clearly. Each new generation responds enthusiastically to certain contemporary, certain past, works of art, and rejects others. Naturally, older men are less ready to welcome the latest, the newest modes, which without their collaboration appear to them the more incomplete. Similarly, the younger men withdraw their sympathy and refuse to collaborate with the vision and methods of their elders. It is no ill thing to retain one's critical faculty. There are queer currents of praise and disapproval; people are mesmerized by names and reputations into uncritical acceptance or rejection. For certain names, like certain drugs, have virtue at one time and none at others.

My younger painter and writer friends tell me that the arts depend for their indispensable structure on the solidity of the social structure and that to-day they feel the want of any firm foundation. They imagine that we others, before the war, lived safe and pampered!

Perhaps this accounts for a certain loose, disintegrated, unstructural quality in many paintings, those of Bonnard, Vuillard and Sickert, for instance, something wavering, sagging and over-ripe, in their figures and still life, an absence of firmness and dignity in their forms.

In contra-distinction to this disintegrating process we have the austerer experiments of Wyndham Lewis, Wadsworth and William Roberts. Picasso has a certain creative ferment, but is too restless and unstable to await the normal developments of his inventions. For Picasso, who sets up finger posts which point in directions which artists throughout the world are ready to follow, is constantly uprooting the posts to plant others, whereon are new directions, some even pointing where there are no roads—does he himself know whither, and to what end? I confess to finding it difficult to understand Picasso's paramount influence; though,

*Aesthetic
finger-posts*

since it is widespread, it is evident he brings something to which the temper of the time responds. Every age expresses itself through its own mode and idiom, and it has usually spoken grammatically. I hear it said that the strange grammar and syntax met with among some poets and painters is in accord with the confusion of post-war times.

That the content, at least, of the arts depends in some measure on social conditions, on the place and power of organized religion in the state, on the form of its government, is obvious enough. The architectural setting, too, which again depends on similar conditions, has its effect on painting and sculpture, on Giotto's at Padua, Michelangelo's in the Sistine, Bernini's at St Peter's, Rubens' at the Louvre, Boucher's at Versailles. Even Renoir's paintings are more comfortable in the Dieppe villa or the Paris apartment than elsewhere. So abstract art, questionable on an isolated canvas, takes its place on the factory wall, or in the modern flat which is based on the factory. Indeed, it must be admitted, even by unfriendly critics, that the present trend of the arts suits the temper and mood of the moment.

That at least is a genuine service; the artist supplies something that is needed, and thus busy he can indulge in the aerial flights of the aesthetic circus. As Augustus John wrote of the advanced French painters 'these fellows have stumbled upon something'.

But we need an art which causes the spirit to exult, as well as one that delights the eye. For while there are numerous men and women who respond to a lofty interpretation of human aspirations, there is a fraction only who comprehend a similar interpretation of form.

How can we expect, for instance, any general interest in the foreshortened nudes of heavy-limbed women so frequent in picture shows. The Italian painters illustrated subjects of grave hieratic tendency, yet their figures, and the landscapes and flowers, were calculated in Yeats's words to please an amorous woman's eyes and the eyes of a King.

CHAPTER XXXI

SHAW AS TRAVELLER

WE went more than once to the Malvern Festival as *Malvern* guests of the Bernard Shaws, when we saw *St Joan*, and *Water* *On the Rocks*, and the Shaws came over to Oakridge to lunch with us. We suggested that Shaw's excellent health was due to the Malvern water; if that was so, he said, it was because the salts in the water were so poisonous that all the salts in his system rush to protect him against the poison and so perhaps buck him up for the rest of the year. He and his wife had recently been on a voyage round the world, when he had managed to write a new play. But wasn't life on a pleasure cruiser disturbing? 'Not a bit,' said Shaw. 'I have an unerring eye for the type of old dear who is flattered to death at the idea of meeting a celebrity—and G. B. S. is not to be met with by every one. Having selected my old dear, I ask her to come and join me one morning, fetch her a chair and a rug, tell her I am setting to work on a new play, and she is so delighted at being given the role of protector of G. B. S. that whenever anyone comes near she makes agitated signs to warn him off, whispering that *Mr Shaw is at work on a new play*. So for the price of a rug and a chair I get perfect peace during the entire voyage!'

In Japan, he went to see a Japanese play, but found it difficult to keep his attention on the players with the audience chattering throughout; in addition attendants with hot towels were in constant demand, and towels were sent hurtling through the air to every part of the theatre. He also visited a Buddhist temple, walking down a corridor lined on

Genius of
Shaw

each side with statues of gods and goddesses—no wonder, he said, that Christianity was declining, with its single God, while any respectable religion has its two or three thousand, or that European artists, having no gods to create, work only to please themselves. Why should anyone buy their pictures? They grumble, but look at the prices they expect! No picture should cost more than £5. I gently drew Shaw's attention to his royalties—I hoped he refused any sum over £50, or at most £100, for the run of a play.

It is delightful to have Shaw accepted as one of the great figures of our time, he once so abused, maligned and misunderstood, at the beginning of the war especially. No doubt the role of the satirist is inopportune when a nation is fighting for its life. He sent me his book, *What I really wrote about the War*, wherein he reprinted the long article which appeared as a supplement to *The New Statesman*, which in the light of later events, now seems less unreasonable. His post-war play, *Heartbreak House*, T. E. Lawrence described as 'the most blazing bit of genius in English literature'.

Shaw's prefaces, too, are surely among the significant writings of our time. As a controversialist he is unique. Hard though he may hit, he is never ill-natured, nor loses his temper; his good humour and good manners are proof against any provocation. When Henry Arthur Jones attacked him with vitriolic abuse, Shaw remained imperturbable. Max, always sympathetic, wrote to Henry Arthur that he understood his wishing Shaw had never been born, but he for his part found himself hoping that Shaw would never die!

On his seventieth birthday I wrote to congratulate Shaw on his youthful vigour—he, wilier than the rest of us, had been able to extract ultra-violet rays from the limelight. In his eighties his vitality is little diminished. At the luncheon table he is still the centre of interest as a talker. I was surprised to hear him declare—speaking of the war in Spain at the Fabian Wares'—civil war to be the only excusable form of war; a startling paradox, I thought. I afterwards came on a similar view in a letter from W. H. Hudson to Edward

Garnett. Shaw, being a true satirist, does not spare Socialists and Communists any more than Liberals or Tories. He amused me lately, lunching at the Soviet Embassy with the Maiskys, by chaffing the Ambassador on his government celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the U.S.S.R. They were giving the show away, said Shaw; all our young communists believe the Soviets to have been in existence a century or more!

I could not imagine Shaw to have remained in Dublin; the atmosphere there was too overcharged. Shaw knows well that an Irishman in England has more liberty to say and write what he thinks than an Irishman in Ireland. He can hold up the English and their institutions to ridicule without fear. I remember Yeats saying that the Irish and the Jews are alike in that they are at their best and most fruitful as a ferment among men of other races.

The Gordon Bottomleys and the Sturge Moores came down occasionally to stay with our neighbours the Fletchers at Daneway Manor, the beautiful house in which Ernest Gimson used to show his furniture, and where Sir Emery Walker lived for some years. But we have singing birds in our own trees, with John Masefield at Pinbury Park, and W. H. Davies at Nailsworth. The coming of the poet-laureate caused a flutter in the neighbourhood, but few knew anything of Davies, who lives in a modest house, with a delectable little garden, where he has made friends with the thrushes and blackbirds. Many honours have come to Masefield; and it was pleasant to hear that a tablet was to be placed on the cottage in which Davies was born. A similar tribute was paid to Sir Henry Newbolt at Bilston in Staffordshire.

It was sad to witness the break-up of Henry Newbolt's health. No one had a finer zest for life than he, or a more generous and sensitive mind. During one of the last visits I paid him he spoke of his wish to leave some endowment to his old school, Clifton College. He would like, he said, to show his respect for those of Jewish faith, whose patriotism and sense of citizenship he admired, by doing something for their sons at Clifton.

He was spared the grief and dismay caused by the disgraceful treatment of Germans of Jewish descent. The Nazi government might make such laws, however severe, as they wished; but the citizens of any state should be able to look for physical protection at least. Yet even this elementary right has been denied them.

Oddly enough, I have not observed any particular tenderness on the part of the Nazis towards pure Aryans other than those who live in Germany. Indeed there is something comic in the Nazi insults to Anglo-Saxons, almost as decadent, it would appear, as the Jews, while their sympathies are reserved for the Semitic Arabs in revolt against an Aryan power. I remember T. E. Lawrence's warm praise of Winston Churchill for having undone much of the evil done at Versailles, by setting on foot an honest policy towards the Arabs. Had Lawrence lived could he have prevented, or solved, the present impasse in Palestine? I heard Ronald Storrs put the case of the Arab, the Jew and the British with a rare impartiality. When he came to stay with us at Oakridge he brought with him, as was his habit, a stout volume, a poetical anthology drawn from many European sources, which Maurice Baring gave to Lawrence, and which Lawrence left to Storrs for use during his lifetime. When A. W. Lawrence asked me to contribute to *T. E. Lawrence by his Friends*, Storrs kindly read over my typescript. He was indulgent in his opinion of what I had written, but took exception to a statement referring to a visit by Lawrence to Mecca. 'If you mean by line five', he wrote, 'as I think you must, that Lawrence was heard of as being in Mecca, that is I believe not so; though, of course, he was heard of by those in Mecca. There is a Delphic ambiguity about the phrase.' Yet I remembered Lawrence telling me clearly of his having been there; that it was in Mecca that he found the one craftsman who could make him his golden dagger.¹

¹ Since writing this I find a reference in a letter from Lawrence to H. R. Hadley in which he refers to his visit to Mecca. (Letter 134, *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence.*)

Storrs is now much in demand as a lecturer. This was the result of his book *Orientalisms*. 'The reverse of this remarkable obverse is the political notoriety which brings upon me shoals of invitations to speak in public. This time last year, if I addressed four or five hundred serious people on an important subject, no newspaper gave me a single line. Now any casual remarks flung at a chance charwoman, two men and a boy, get half a column in *The Times*. No more pleasure in all that, than displeasure in previous silences.'

There are forms of logrolling which may well be questioned; there is, however, a natural urge to sound the trumpet for that which wins our wholehearted admiration. Ethel Smyth wrote in this spirit on Maurice Baring, Rose Macaulay on E. M. Forster. Dame Ethel was accused of being altogether uncritical in her attitude. I liked the frank warmth of her tribute and told her so; I am for those who do what they like. Dame Ethel replied:

My dear Sir William,

I cannot tell you but I believe you can imagine my joy over your letter—not only because of your warm appreciation of my Baring book—do I not know that you always see what one is aiming at and are ever generous with your appreciation?—but also because, like myself, the Cambridge idea of reviewing—which practically *is* the habit of detrimentalizing—is a thing which infuriates you. These idiots! How strange that they don't see how much easier pouncing on an author's faults, or lacks, is than any other part of a reviewer's job! Does life teach them nothing?—For instance, how cheap, what a confession of smallness of soul it is as soon as you mention anybody, almost, to run off a list of their faults. As if we don't all of us *know* each other's faults! But if you are by a way of admiring or being fond of a personality, how ugly, how unseemly to insist on the defects! And how cowardly too! For this spirit is the child of a dread *not* to be thought clever and critical. (At this point though not really applicable occurs to me that remark of Goethe's, quoted by

Effects of me in the Maurice, that the best stomachs are not so fastidious as all that!)
time

I think Christian theology and the idea of Judgment has a good deal to do with it, each one seeing himself as deputizing for the Great Judge!

Apart from all that, it is apparently unthinkable to the tribe of reviewers that one can start *handling* and displaying to the best of your power—the works of an artist with—(really and honestly)—no idea of ‘criticizing’, in the sense of picking out and dwelling on his weak sides! Why! what you are trying to do is to bring home the worth as you see it, to those who, so far, have only partially received it; that *that*—(and that *only*) is your idea, is a thing that has never entered their heads as a possibility! One phrase in your letter I don’t quite follow. You say, after telling me you like my “pungent directness” that in this last work you find, too, “a happy acceptance under the impulse of homage”; I wonder exactly what you mean by that; if ever you have (or can fabricate) an idle moment will you tell me? Again *thank* you.

Yours very sincerely,

ETHEL SMYTH.

I do not remember what I wrote to Dame Ethel; but by the happy acceptance under the impulse of homage I imagine I meant that when one admires one accepts that which the artist gives us, without cavilling. If the acceptance is incomplete, one naturally marks the faults; we are then, moreover, irritated by unmitigated praise.

Each of us does, in fact, accept certain works wholeheartedly, even uncritically. Thus, during the latter years of last century, was Meredith accepted by many who now find him as difficult to read as did those who deprecated him. It is Hardy, not Meredith, who is now most read, both as poet and as novelist. Yet Meredith will come into his own again.

I lately saw, on loan at the Tate Gallery, Whistler’s portrait of Carlyle, wherein I found, together with much beautiful painting, some apparent weaknesses not present in the



THE HON. MAURICE BARING

portrait of his mother. So with Rodin's *Baiser*, for the acquisition of which by Edward Warren I was largely responsible; I can no longer accept it as completely as I then did. This does not mean that the first exciting stimulus aroused by a new work of art is to be deprecated; by no means. A work may have a meaning and weight at one time, indeed the time may be long subsequent to its production, which may be lost at another. Yet the appreciation of a few seldom fails even the most neglected; Blake, Keats, Meryon, Daumier had their ardent supporters—I suppose Chatterton to have been one of the rare exceptions.

*Effects of
time*

CHAPTER XXXII

LECTURES AND PRIZES

*A noble
spirit*

DURING 1938 there died Gaganendranath Tagore, the most cultured and intellectual of the painters of the so-called Calcutta School. During my visit to India some twenty-eight years earlier, he and his better known brother Abanindranath had received me with friendly warmth, and since then I had kept in touch with both. I wrote to Rabin-dranath, after hearing of his nephew's death. He replied:

My dear Rothenstein,

Thanks for your letter. What you write is quite true. It is a heavy price to pay for living long, this constant loss of one's dear ones. A long life, like many other acquisitions, is a blessing only if it is enjoyed by all whom one loves and cherishes. I was, however, reconciled to Gaganendra's death long before it actually came—ever since that fatal disease deprived him of his power of expression. Body had become literally a prison to his noble and adventurous spirit. Death has only released it.

It is good to hear from you. Your letter recalls many happy days and contacts for which one feels grateful to life. Oakridge will always remain associated with them. I am glad to hear it remains the same as it was. Here is another consequence of old age, that while age and distance enhance the charm of old associations, they disable one from renewing them.

My imagination is as restless as ever. I try to restrain myself, but hardly has one book come out when I am correcting

proofs of another. It would amuse you to know that my last book on science has already run into three editions. My little book of poems written after illness is also selling well. I sometimes wonder if what people admire as 'creative activity' is not after all a kind of disease. And then this painting, it has become a regular playmate of mine, giving me just the distraction I need from literary talkativeness. It is like dreaming.

No, I have not read Mr Leo Myers' novel *The Root and the Flower*. I am ordering a copy and shall be very glad to read it.

I am glad Bill¹ is doing so well. If some of his paintings have been reproduced I should be happy to see them.

With my best wishes and affectionate greetings,

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

Besides his varied creative work Rabindranath was still editing his *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*. Herein he printed, besides a short interpretation of his nephew Gaganendranath, the Sir George Birdwood Memorial lecture which I delivered before the Royal Society of Arts early in the year, when, for the first time, I felt an answering enthusiasm before the examples of Indian sculpture shown on the screen. Hitherto my admiration for the plastic genius of India was regarded rather as a bee in my bonnet.

How Leo Myers' *Root and the Flower* impressed Tagore I never heard.

I was delighted that it won the Femina Prize, and that the presentation was to be made by Max Beerbohm. I scarcely conceive Max, respectful and admiring though he would be towards Leo Myers, reading through a philosophical novel; for philosophical, social and religious discussion is far from Max's orbit. He would listen with genial politeness, allow a free passage through his mind to such discussion, but would scarcely attempt to retain any of its import. It was a surprise when the following year it fell to me to follow Max in presenting the Femina Prize for 1937.

¹ My son William Michael.

*An
invitation
to Canada*

The French work chosen by the English committee was *Jeux de Vilains* by Mme Elvire Pélissier, a strange story of rough peasant life, dealing in part with an old woman's devotion to a cherished goat. It was sent to me to read at the same time as the English novel *Faith, Hope, and no Charity*, by Miss Margaret Lane, the choice of the French committee. I found Miss Lane's book very good reading, a picture of the rather dusty bohemian life of a beautiful girl, a dancer with but moderate talent whose one love affair came to a fruitless end and who drifts sadly, as do so many of her kind, narrowly missing marriage with an affluent Yorkshireman. The account of her visit to his home and her reception by his mother I thought excellent. 'I was very gratified to hear that as a Yorkshireman you did not repudiate Tom and his mother. A Southerner I imagine must always feel some apprehension in drawing a Northerner. It is reassuring to have some support from a Bradford man.' But a Bradford man does not always get support from Bradford! Somewhat earlier I had been invited to hold an exhibition of my work in Canada. There were also difficulties, I understood, at the National Gallery at Ottawa; a pressing request came from the Director, Eric Brown, to discuss matters with him at the same time. Major Ney wanted me to give two or three lectures and I received a cordial invitation from Lord Bessborough, then Governor-General, to stay at Government House. All this was very tempting; but I was afraid the adventure would prove too much of a strain. Nor would it be easy to borrow all the works by which I would wish to be represented. It struck me, however, that my native city might be interested in seeing a selection of my work, and I wrote to the Director of the Bradford Art Gallery to ask whether such an exhibition would be welcome. There came a non-committal reply and I heard nothing more of the matter. Lately, when a collection of my paintings was to be sent round the country, and various public galleries expressed a wish to have them for exhibition, from the Bradford gallery there came no such wish.

I was again reminded of Burne-Jones's comment that the one thing that is not asked of a painter is to paint. A painter is asked to open exhibitions, to address students, to serve on committees, to criticise amateur shows, and it is often easier to say yes than to say no.

My friend W. W. Vaughan asked me to preside at one of the educational meetings held annually during January at University College; he explained that no artist had yet acted as President. Save for an inaugural discourse, he promised me, there would be no further duties. I could not write an address, but if I might improvise I was willing to do as he wished. In a desultory talk, I dealt with the more active side of education, claiming for the hand a wisdom parallel to that of the mind; moreover I protested against the idea that education consists of knowing about things rather than doing them; as though the knowledge gained through active creative work counts for less than that one gets, say, at a university? What could Blake, Turner and Gainsborough, Crome or Constable have gained at a university? There is no Oxford accent in the wind or in the trees nor in the song of the lark or the nightingale. I recently came upon a remark made in a letter by Guevara,¹ a contemporary of Castiglione, author of *The Courtier*, which pleased me: 'When amongst Knights and Gentlemen talk is of armes, a Gentleman ought to have great shame to say, that he read it, but rather that he saw it. For it is very convenient for the Philosopher to recount what he hath read, but the Knight or Gentleman it becommes to speak of things *that he hath done.*'

¹ Translated by Edward Hellowes (1574).

CHAPTER XXXIII

A CAREER CUT SHORT

*Reading
of poetry*

To read poetry is a solace. Not that I am a careful, much less a profound, reader of verse. I read as I watch the landscape from a train, seeing hills and valleys, rivers and the sea, towns and villages under sun or cloud, by day or in the evening light. I was pleased when Frances Cornford dedicated to me her book of poems, *Different Days*. Frances came to dine with us one night when Ralph Hodgson was with us. They talked together of dreams, and Ralph told of how certain lines came to him in his sleep; such lines as 'so time moves slowly on whitening old city churches'. And another time, in a dream, when he felt the presence of a spirit of malevolence:

Withhold a spirit from the mouth of Hell,
But entertain a devil all your days.

Frances said, 'The only piece I ever wrote in a dream was when I saw this verse printed up in my mind's eye:

How well the Hippopotamus
Digests his daily dinner,
Because he makes no sort of fuss
Gets fat instead of thinner.'

It pleased me too that my children made friends with the Cornford children, the two elder ones, Helena and John, who were nearer their own ages. John as a child was unusually independent and fearless. At the age of sixteen he had already gained a senior scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge. Too young to enter the University, he came to the

London School of Economics; at Stowe his strong democratic sympathies had already turned him towards Communism. He came but rarely to see us; he would allow no place in the changing world for artists and poets who were not Communists, and he withheld himself from me. I was a friend of his parents and belonged to a different generation, not to be admitted among the elect—yet I respected his forthrightness and his eagerness to deny himself the comforts and decencies of his class. One envies the young who believe that life can be adjusted to theories of order and justice. There is no answer when youth attacks the wretched conditions which a large part of mankind have to endure. What is the use of saying with Balzac, that equality may be a *right*, but no power on earth can convert it to a fact? Tolstoi tried to adjust his life to his ideas; so did Lawrence, who, being unmarried, found it easier. We see the evil conditions about us, and feel the urge to throw ourselves into the struggle for betterment; then we revert to our accustomed ways, which between the rival systems of Fascists and Communists do not appear likely to remain long accustomed.

John Cornford's high promise was cut short: he was killed fighting for the Republicans in Spain on his twenty-first birthday. When a collection of essays by his friends on John's brief life was published, his father, Francis Cornford, wrote to me: 'What doesn't appear is the wisdom and gentleness there was underneath the superficial arrogance. There was a good deal of Francis Darwin¹ in his nature, combined with that astonishing intellectual force and strength of character, which F. D. had not. And that side was already beginning to assert itself. There seemed to be no limits to what he might do.'

John Cornford had the courage to live his theories. I was put in mind of the gallant Irishmen who were killed or executed in the Easter rebellion of 1916, who also put their beliefs into practice.

¹ John Cornford's maternal grandfather.

*Some
chances
missed*

'I wish you would find some way of making a drawing of Maud Gonne,' Yeats wrote to me of his great friend, who had played an active part in the rebellion. 'No artist has ever drawn her. And just now she looks magnificent. I cannot imagine anything but an air-raid that would bring her to London. She might come to see the spectacle. Do you ever go to Dublin?'

I had met Maud Gonne in the days of her great beauty and had seen her in Dublin during my visit there in 1922; she was then still hard and bitter in her hatred of England; she could not forgive the executions of her friends. As Yeats wrote, only an attack on London would tempt her to set foot on English soil. Yet there was something noble in her nature which went with the imposing presence. But I could scarcely go so far as Dublin to make the drawing.

I was sad to have missed a chance of drawing Admiral Sir William Fisher, who as Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet had his headquarters at Plymouth, and came rarely to London. Lady Fisher asked me down to Plymouth for a week-end, at a time, unfortunately, when I was engaged, but I arranged to go a fortnight later. Then came the news of the Admiral's sudden death. I deeply regretted that I had put off the sittings. 'I feel it a crime that he was never painted nor drawn, so often talked of and wished and anticipated,' wrote Lady Fisher.

It fell to me to paint a portrait of Austen Chamberlain as Chancellor of Reading University. I had wished him more suitably dressed for the part; a stiff collar and tie with pearl pin and white slip to his waistcoat, fitted ill with the gilt and rich silk of the Chancellor's robes; bands would have been more suitable. The Chancellors at Oxford and Cambridge when officiating at university functions would likewise appear more seemly in knee breeches and shoes. Lord Baldwin at the head of a Cambridge procession in morning-coat and trousers, while his robes are held up by pages, might as fitly have his pipe in his mouth. Seemly ceremonial still appertains to the Law; why should it not to learning?



SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

I little thought while painting Austen Chamberlain that his life was drawing to a close. He sent me, after the portrait was finished, his last book, which consisted largely of letters to his father, then stricken with illness, letters written after long hours in the House of Commons, telling of the political events from day to day, a notable example of filial devotion. I wrote to acknowledge the gift early the next morning. Then at the breakfast table I read of his death in *The Times*.

*A conversation
piece at
Oxford*

The following year I was asked to paint a conversation piece for Worcester College:¹ the Provost and five of the dons sitting in the Common-room over their wine. I also painted a portrait of Gathorne Girdlestone, the presiding genius of the orthopaedic hospital at Headington, to whose manipulating skill was added a beautiful tenderness. I learned much from the Worcester painting, but again I was not given the chance of profiting by what I learned. Want of consecutive practice is a handicap; one envies the skill of a Rowlandson, for instance, the ease with which he drew his figures, in repose or violent action, his buildings and landscapes. He was a complete master of his means. Muirhead Bone in his drawings of Spain approaches this mastery.

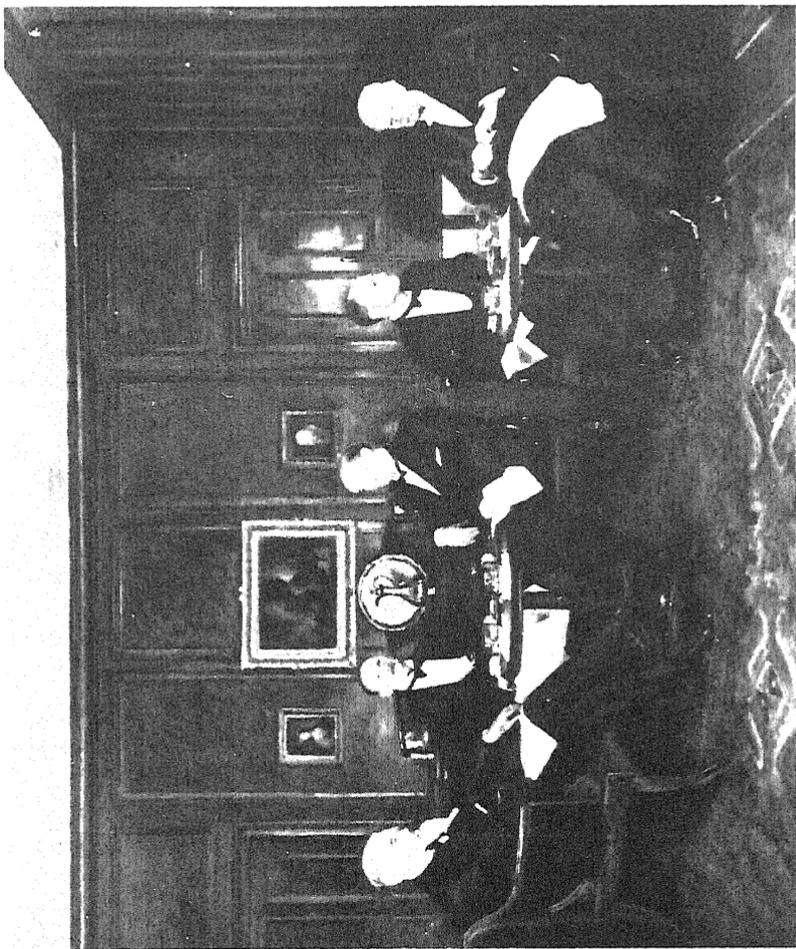
Worcester College with its group of cottages, each cottage originally destined for a particular group of Benedictines, is unique in showing the character of the medieval university. It was owing to lack of funds that the cottages were preserved, for in addition to the three sides of the square a fourth was planned. Oxford has been careless of her legacies from the past. Even the Arts End of the Bodleian, practically unchanged since Bodley planned it, has lately been threatened.

Change is a necessary element of life; but some continuity may well be preserved. What would we not give, for instance, to see a cathedral, even a village church, as it appeared before the Reformation? Time is just, but cruel, at once the partner of death and the initiator of life. There is

¹ The painting was presented to the College by R. E. M. Coke-Harvey.

one small church at Inglesham, near Kelmscott, the interior of which, with its early pews, was saved by William Morris from despoilment. I suggested to Emery Walker that a small plate be put up in the Inglesham church to put this on record. Walker promised to get a plate inscribed with some appropriate words, but illness and his subsequent death intervened. One of the students of the Royal College of Art cut an inscription on a small copper plate: 'This church was repaired in 1889 through the energy and with the help of William Morris, who loved it,' which was duly affixed to the wall of the church, to May Morris's satisfaction.

During the summer when I was painting at Worcester College there was a gathering of young people come to recite poems before a jury of poets, and to hear their comments on the diction and interpretation. At the same time John Masefield was producing his *Diversions* at Oxford, a series of plays and recitals. The plays were acted in the open air at St Edmund Hall, which provided a perfect setting and allowed the players to make their entrances and their exits through the doors round the quadrangle. I saw two of the performances, Kidd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Christopher Hassall's *Devil's Dyke*; the first produced by Neville Coghill, the second by Hassall himself. The character of Hyronimo was admirably played by Cave-Brown-Cave, an undergraduate of St Edmund Hall. I had not thought, reading Hassall's dramatic poem, that it would make a stage play, yet it held the audience throughout. William Devlin, who sprang into fame through his interpretations of *Lear* and *Peer Gynt*, played the Devil, George Benson the part of an old shepherd, and Christopher himself the Spirit of the Neighbourhood. I have never heard blank verse more clearly spoken. George Benson's rendering of the old shepherd came, I thought, near to perfection. Here was a young actor specially fitted, like Devlin, to play great Shakespearian parts. Yet heretofore I was told he had only played comic characters. Ruth Pitter told me that she was not surprised that Hassall's poem acted so well; she thought his talent more dramatic than lyri-



THE COMMON ROOM, WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD

cal. Afterwards Auden spoke of the aims of his fellow-poets with obvious sincerity. Yet he talked as though he and his friends were for the first time aware of the sufferings of men and women, avoidable it seemed to him; a subject which, throughout the centuries, has occupied many minds.

Someone read a poem by Eliot. I enjoy Eliot's conversation; profound, and agate-like in its clarity. His poetry I find difficult. I heard him read some of his own poems on an occasion when Max Beerbohm, Philip Guedalla and Aldous Huxley also read selections from their writings for some charity. While Eliot was reading there were signs of restlessness and inattention. Such ill manners in what was presumed to be a cultivated audience were unexpected. But Eliot continued to read superbly.

There is a growing interest in the reading of poetry by poets themselves. Several poets, Yeats and Davies among them, have given readings from Broadcasting House. There are some who do not care for the poet's attitude to the reading of verse, holding it to be mannered. But who would make love to a woman in his usual voice?

One of the best speakers of verse I have heard—indeed one of the best after-dinner speakers too—is Humbert Wolfe. Humbert, a busy Civil Servant, high up in the Ministry of Labour, yet manages in his spare time to produce a flow of poems, poetical plays, biographies (his study of George Moore is as discerning as it is entertaining), and two brilliant pieces of autobiography, *Now a Stranger* and *Upward Anguish*, the one an account of his childhood at Bradford, the second of his youth at Oxford. Both books are subtly named, for through their 'laughter from a cloud' there runs a bitter thread, as from one who suffers estrangement from his fellows.

During 1937 I published a set of twenty-four drawings, my eleventh and presumably my last book of portraits. Again the book owed much to friends who wrote the text to accompany the portraits. Among these was one of Elie Halévy, made but a few weeks before he died. The

*A working
men's
college*

original drawing was acquired by a number of his English admirers and presented by them to the Ecole des Sciences Politiques in Paris. The drawing I made of R. H. Tawney was acquired by Tom Jones for Coleg Harlech. Of Tawney Tom Jones said that he is 'in the succession of the Saints . . . The Labour Party owes him a debt which it will never discharge; it has not known how best to use his rare gifts and has taken care to give him impossible parliamentary seats.' Of his books he writes that 'they are gospels couched in prose of such quality that it has gone straight into the anthologies in the author's lifetime'. Tawney is a neighbour, since he lives but a couple of miles away from Oakridge in a tiny cottage overlooking the Slad valley. It happened I was to entertain a bevy of members of the Workers' Educational Association from Swindon led by an old friend, Reuben George, a fine type of townsman, a sturdy idealist, fresh complexioned, redhaired and redbearded. I asked Tawney to come over to meet the party; as he came up the road a burst of cheering greeted him: I had not realized he was President of the whole W.E.A. movement! Like other passionate rebels against the existing order Tawney is by nature modest, gentle and kindly, a rebel who believes the Christian policy to be a practical one and bases his own conduct on it, holding that public equally with private conduct should steer its course by Christian standards. Perhaps their value has not for long been so apparent as to-day, when we see the effect of their abandonment by the Dictators. It is significant that in Germany, the most signal opposition to their actions has come from Christian churchmen, Catholics and Protestants alike.

Coleg Harlech is a college for working men, and for men out of work, wherein the staff and students mix freely together, to their mutual benefit. Here the students can study the subjects which most attract them, after the drudgery of uncongenial daily labour, and they have books, and quiet and encouragement of which the wage earner is too often deprived. Above all, the College regards unemployment as an



R. H. TAWNEY

affront to our civilization, and the unemployed man as a person whose gifts have to be preserved and developed. Tom Jones is deeply concerned with the welfare of the College. Nothing is too good for the students: he must contrive to get some painting done in their refectory. I put him in touch with Robert Baker, whose paintings at the village hall at Wood Green at once attracted him, and he thereupon managed to raise £200 for a mural decoration. But the subject for the painting must be decided by the students themselves. The result was so happy, and the relation between painter and students so cordial, that Robert Baker, disregarding the fact that he had carried out that for which he was paid, went on with further paintings for his own pleasure.

Tom Jones has recently written an absorbingly interesting account of his early years at Rhymney, a small Welsh mining village. He could, if he wished, write a still more stirring tale of his later years in London, for as understudy to Sir Maurice Hankey in the Cabinet Secretariat he was friend and counsellor to each succeeding Prime Minister. No one more human than Tom Jones. But never have I met anyone so discreet as Hankey. I stayed a week-end with the Fishers at New College when Hankey was a fellow-guest. No matter what the course of the conversation, no hint of any opinion on current affairs passed his lips. To expect inner information from political bigwigs is usually to be disappointed; one can learn more of the significance of current events from such men as Nevinson, Tawney or Hammond.

How agreeable is the companionship of the older scholarly type of journalist! Such was George Buckle, Geoffrey Dawson's predecessor as editor of *The Times*. Buckle, large framed, large featured, heavily bearded and with massive forehead, had the gentlest, the most courteous of manners. He could quote from the ancient or modern classics with ease and appropriateness and drew on his wide knowledge only when occasion called. A simple goodness shone in him, for he had remained untainted by long association with

On public speakers affairs of the great, but not always untainted, world. With two others connected with *The Times* I have had equally happy relations, Wynnard Hooper and F. S. A. Lowndes. Hooper seemed informed on any and every subject. He knew his Dickens as well, I can swear, as Bernard Darwin; he knew too the record of every Alpine climber during the last half century. He took it for granted that his friends must be equally well informed, a flattering estimate of my poorly stocked mind. Lowndes, too, has the scholar's mind and the easy, unassuming manners that were Buckle's and Hooper's. Doubtless the well-groomed, well-tailored journalists of to-day, when they reach ripe years, will have similar friendly comfortable ways.

There is another (not a journalist, though I believe he has edited a review), Sir George Leveson-Gower, who has the gentle breeding, the smooth wit and urbanity of an older generation. To hear him make an after-dinner speech, a speech enlivened by apt quotation, with no looseness of statement from beginning to end, is to realize something of the quality of past orators. There are few pleasures more agreeable than to hear good after-dinner speaking, few moments less endurable than when listening to a poor speaker. Yet though all men feel this, once the last is on his feet, there he remains, for the earth will not open neither will a bolt come from above.

As an official I had to attend many public dinners and to listen to many speeches from public men. If they touched on the arts they never failed to speak of them as the great bond between the nations. But is it so? Our reverence for Plato and Phidias did not encourage any greater sympathy for the Greek people during the war, nor did our devotion to Dante and to Leonardo inspire us with ardour for the Abyssinian campaign. So to-day the German love for Shakespeare scarcely sweetens the sentiments towards England which come from the German press. The effect of art is like Dr. Johnson's dictum on the influence of wine; that it makes us merrier when inclined to mirth, glummer when we are

depressed. So the arts bring a warmer sympathy when sympathy is already there, but are ineffective when relations are disturbed.

*The
shadow of
Munich*

I had arranged some time before to show a number of my works at the Leicester Galleries during the autumn of 1938. It would then be fifty years since, at the Slade School, I started on my career. October 4th was the date fixed for the opening. But early in the last week of September sinister movements were taking place on the borders of Czechoslovakia, which suddenly developed into a threat of war likely to involve this country. I hesitated to leave so many of my pictures in one place, and the situation was such as to make the holding of any exhibition doubtful. At the Athenaeum close by a friend from the War Office told me how anxiously the Government departments viewed the course of events. I was reminded strangely of the 19th of March 1918 when a hint was given me that I would do well to take my drawings from the 5th Army front to G.H.Q. for safety. Thereupon I had all my canvases removed from their frames and early next morning I took them by car to Gloucestershire. That night I heard Mr Chamberlain, on his return from Munich, speak on the wireless; and so convincing was the tenor of his speech that I decided to bring back my pictures to London next day, in time for the private view on the following Tuesday—not a propitious time for a picture show!

The Prime Minister's conduct of the negotiations at Munich is likely to be discussed for many years to come. Of its wisdom only time will judge. But hearing him speak (from Broadcasting House) of his horror of war, of his responsibility for countless lives, his anxiety to deal in time with the situation which might at any moment bring war to the doors of Europe, I was deeply impressed by his patent sincerity. I thought of Lord Morley's reason for resigning from the cabinet in August 1914: that he felt himself responsible for the life of the humblest ploughman and could not be a party to a war by which he would be the innocent

The shadow of Munich sufferer. I could, moreover, understand a British Prime Minister doing everything possible up to the limits of national dignity to prevent the universal ruin which war must bring. At least if it came his conscience would be clear. But there were some who doubted the wisdom of a British Prime Minister in taking so unusual a step, which, unless he were dealing with a statesman generous enough to appreciate his courageous gesture, put him at a tactical disadvantage.

It was with astonishment that we heard of the unpreparedness of our defences. There had been warnings and signs enough. It was clearly this knowledge that tied Mr Chamberlain's hands at Munich.

CHAPTER XXXIV

DEATH OF YEATS

THERE was some stir when Wyndham Lewis' portrait of T. E. Eliot was rejected by the jury of the Royal Academy. Lewis is a dangerous person to rouse: he made full use of his power of attack. The culmination was Augustus John's resignation from the Academy. Lewis has kept himself aloof, and fought his own, a lonely battle. Knowing the world he has to contend with, he holds that two courses are open to an artist, a passive one of ironic indifference, or a militant one, such as that which Whistler adopted. But the hard steel edges of Lewis's character have lately become rounded and polished. He has always been markedly sane in his outlook on the arts, and in conversation and discussion he is considerate of an opinion he respects; if one praises a work in which he has not been interested, he is ready to review his opinion. I came lately on a phrase that pleased me: 'The comprehension of art demands the most strenuous endeavour, the most scrupulous care.' Hard and fast opinions are held less by creative artists than by scholars and experts: artists have more essential humility.

*Rejection
of a
portrait*

When a collection of French nineteenth-century paintings, largely brought together by Lord Ivor Churchill, was shown at the Burlington Galleries under the auspices of the Anglo-French Art and Travel Society, I wrote to Lord Ivor regretting that the more poetical side of French painting was not represented; for example, there were no paintings by J. F. Millet or Puvis de Chavannes. He replied that he had only wanted the best French work to be shown! Incidentally

*Anglo-
French
amenities*

among these were several works by van Gogh, scarcely to be counted as a Frenchman; but such as he was, van Gogh based his art not only on the subject matter, but equally on the methods of Millet.

During the summer a party of French men and ladies came to the West of England under the auspices of the French Society 'L'Art et Tourisme', to visit some of the great country houses. I was asked to meet them at Gloucester, to take them on to Berkeley Castle. Now since they were being taken to some of the older country houses, I thought they should visit one modern house, that they might see something of present day English taste and skill. I took them, therefore, to the Biddulphs' house at Rodmarton. I was not mistaken in my anticipation; the French party was enchanted with the stately stone building and all they saw within, the fittings and furniture, all, or nearly all, of local provenance.

There were other activities with which the Anglo-French societies were concerned. Yvette Guilbert came over to London and delighted a packed house with her powerful rendering of old French ballads. She sang, too, some of Bruant's and Xanrof's songs, which I heard her sing, a slender and provocative *gamine*, at the Moulin Rouge and the Divan Japonais. How strangely distant those days, when I went to these places with Conder, Anquetin and Toulouse-Lautrec! It is odd that, while I can still remember words and tunes of songs heard at Montmartre well enough to sing them (out of tune of course, yet recognizably), other tunes, heard since, are forgotten. There was a song, by Maurice Vaucaire, I think:

Encore un baiser, veux-tu bien?

Un baiser qui n'engage à rien

Sans qu'on se touche.

Tu le rendras à ton amant

En te figurant un moment,

Tu as ma bouche;

and others by Donnay, Xanrof and Bruant, words and tunes still fresh in my mind.

While Yvette was singing, I caught sight of a white-bearded figure sitting in the front row—surely I knew that face—yes, it was Arthur Symons, Symons who had written with such ardent enthusiasm of Yvette in the nineties. And as he left the hall in opera hat and winged cloak, modish in those distant days, the past and the present drew together.

*A survivor
of the
nineties*

I scarcely expected that Symons with his delicate state of health would be almost the last survivor of the poets' circle of the nineties. For now Years was to see his last winter. His heart had for some time been a cause of anxiety and he spent his winters abroad. On December 29th, 1938, he wrote to me from Cap Martin:

My dear Rothenstein,

You advised me two or three years ago to get some embroidery designs from Diana Murphy. I asked her for four large designs, she has done three and all are beautiful and I suppose the fourth will come sooner or later; but I want something rather different now. I want another mind and I want one or two small designs (say eighteen inches by twelve). My sister, as you know, was the pupil of William Morris and May Morris and is probably the only one left now. She is trying to do a series of needle pictures which represents incidents or symbols of the Irish heroic age. Miss Murphy has done the Land of Youth as it is in my early poetry, a design from a poem of mine called 'The Happy Townland', and an 'Innis-free'. The idea of these designs and of one she is now doing is to picture an ideal country. I want one or two heroic incidents possibly from my poems, familiar themes. I will of course send suggestions, probably from the old epics. In England the romantic movement is of course over and the average artists guys the dream. With us it is the opposite. Some of the best known of the young men who got themselves in 1916 had the Irish legendary hero Cuchullain so much in their minds that the Government has celebrated the event with a bad statue. For us a legendary man or woman must still be able to fight or to dance. Now do you know of

*Last days
of Yeats*

some young artist who would do one or two designs for me and not be too expensive? I know this is making a great claim upon your time but I have been trying everywhere in vain.

Yours ever,

W. B. YEATS.

Yeats was evidently unaware that May Morris had died a few months previously. He had been struck by some imaginative drawings which my son Michael had shown him; I suggested therefore that he might like Michael to try his hand. 'Would your son care to do a design for embroidery for any of the following poems of mine?' he wrote on January 3rd, 1939, '“Byzantium”, a “Sailing to Byzantium” or “The Wandering of Aengus”?' I am asking Macmillan to send him my collected poems. . . . The poems I have selected are all well known to our public and I think it will be more easy to sell a design if it suggests the poem and the poem suggests it.' But he was not to see the designs. Little more than three weeks later his heart gave out.

'I will tell you of Yeats's death,' wrote Dorothy Wellesley who was staying at Mentone; 'Hilda,¹ W. J. Turner and I went to see him on the Saturday before he died. I had never seen him in better health, wits, charm or vitality. He was wearing his light brown suit, blue shirt and handkerchief. Under the lamp his hair seemed a pale sapphire blue. I thought during the talk: "What a beautiful man." He read aloud his last poem. A fine affair as I remember it. He asked Hilda to make a tune for it. She walked out of the hotel and she and I walked up and down in the darkness trying the tune. When we came back she sang the air, he seemed pleased. His last projective thought seems to me to be this wish for "words for melody". *Melody* not *music* conventionally spoken of: folk, ballad, etc. (I from early childhood have craved for this union "words for an air") and this is what we must now carry on.—Tuesday he could not come

¹ Hilda Matheson.

to spend the evening here as he seemed tired. Wednesday *Last days*
Turner left for England. Thursday Hilda and I went to see *of Yeats*
him. I stayed only five minutes, he seemed very ill. In the
afternoon we went again, Mrs Yeats had said: "Come back
and light the flame!" I sat on the floor by his bed holding his
hand; he struggled to speak: "Are you writing—are you
writing?" "Yes, yes." "Good, good." He kissed my hand, I
his. Soon after he wandered a little in his speech. On Friday
he was worse. I saw him for a few minutes; he then passed
into what proved to be his last coma. He had much pain from
the heart, but morphia helped him. So ended in the material
sense this short and beautiful friendship.'

CHAPTER XXXV
FRENCH VISITORS

*Molière
in London*

EARLY in 1939 the company from the Comédie Française was invited to London by the Anglo-French Art and Travel Society. I was curious to see how Molière would be interpreted to-day; for since making portraits of the Coquelins at the Comédie some forty-eight years ago I had seen no performance there. It was a pleasure to hear again the clear speaking of the lines, the players not making too much of the rhymes. The performance, *L'École des maris*, was brilliant, though a little on the farcical side. I missed the well worn but characteristic dresses, which once filled the wardrobes at the Comédie Française. Only Sganarelle's sober brown costume brought them to mind. The pale mauve dresses of Léonore and Valérie were too clean, not quite in the character—Louis Quatorze with a smack of Liberty! But there, what is true of pictures and books is equally true of the drama. A play is to be enjoyed from one's seat, not in reminiscence.

My close relations with Denis Saurat kept me in touch with the French Institute and, through Roland de Margerie and his wife and my old friend Henry Davray, with the French Embassy. The tradition by which an Embassy is a part of national territory is a pleasant one for a visitor. In an instant one travels from Albert Gate up the steps into the hall of the Embassy into Paris. We also enjoyed friendly relations with the Maiskys at the Soviet Embassy. There the interior was, in fact, save for the paintings on the walls, more French than Russian, and it was somewhat startling to come

upon a huge portrait, halfway up the staircase, of Stalin, in heavy boots, buttoned up in his square-shouldered coat. *Parties at the Soviet Embassy*

While the Sokolnikovs were at the Embassy only the few officials who attended their receptions wore evening dress. With the Maiskys things changed. They were generally liked. Official tension was eased and the evening parties at the Soviet Embassy became popular among all manner of people. We were sorry to read that the Sokolnikovs found themselves in trouble on their return to Russia. A political career in the U.S.S.R. is a dangerous one, as it became in Austria. For Soviet Russia, like Nazi Germany, has returned to Tudor methods in its dealings with politicians. In fact, my friend G. P. Gooch could never forgive the cruelties of the Soviet and Nazi States, which shocked his tender nature. So kind and full of feeling is Gooch that, when asking after members of our family he hears that all are well, he seems almost disappointed that he must withhold his ever ready sympathy.

When lately we were bidden to dine at the Soviet Embassy I was surprised to find Lord Halifax and Winston Churchill of the party. The Spanish Ambassador, Señor de Azcarate, and his wife were also there, a sad couple, for Barcelona had fallen to Franco, and his armies had reached the French frontier. Sir Sydney Clive told me Señor de Azcarate was the most saintly character he had ever known. How melancholy must his feelings have been at such a time and in such company.

My old friend Zuloaga, who had recently been showing his pictures in London, spoke of General Franco as a gallant man and a true lover of his country, who would never allow foreign interference in the affairs of Spain.

What a strange mixture of power and coarseness Zuloaga shows in his paintings! His peasants against their background of austere Spanish landscape and village are virile in character, in the good Spanish tradition; but his ladies, nude, or decked out with their lace mantillas, shock by their crudity. His portraits, too, are over emphasized. But how capable

Artists and propaganda a painter is Zuloaga! It is odd that with his intense admiration for El Greco and Goya his work should not have more of their quality.

Much propaganda came from both sides during the Civil War in Spain; perhaps the greater quantity from the Republicans. I confess to a reluctance to withhold all sympathy from one party while giving full support to the other. Artists and writers are frequently asked to sign letters and appeals which have a vague humanitarian note. A signature costs nothing, imposes no active duty and, moreover, it is often easier to sign than to give a reason for not signing.

To-day more courage is needed to support the less popular side, that is, less popular among the intellectuals, than to give adherence to that which is connected with 'Labour'.

Spiritual beauty is not so common that it must be denied to those belonging to a class with which the time is out of sympathy. Are we not all made up of similar bundles of sensation—sharing the same qualities and the same faults? Certain strands may be stronger in one, in another weaker. Generous natures are aware of the finer strands in others, the meaner see meanness only.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PARIS REVISITED

IN the spring of this year, 1939, chance sent me to the South of France, to Monaco and Monte Carlo. I scarcely expected to find myself in this paradise of the idle, though my friends, the Bussys, who lived at Cabbé Roquebrune, had often asked me to stay with them. I was somewhat disappointed to discover Roquebrune to be almost a suburb of Monte Carlo; I expected to find it more like the small Italian coast towns, Sestri Levante, Camogli, Lerici. But seeing the little primitive hill towns behind Monaco with their tortuous streets and mysterious houses, I understood the attraction that artists find in this part of France. At Cabbé Roquebrune, I was told the Bussys had let their villa. I found them living at Nice, in a charming flat, the walls painted a pearly grey, hung with Simon Bussy's clear, bright paintings and pastels, among them three remarkable portraits, one of Lytton Strachey as a young man, and two recent pastels of Gide and Valéry. How often are the best portraits done by men who do not call themselves portrait painters! Bussy's portraits, admirable interpretations of character, are done with a technical perfection which rivals that of Latour. Matisse also lives at Nice, to whom Bussy sent word that I was with him, and a few minutes later Matisse appeared. We had met some thirty years ago; now I found him, with grey hair and beard, grave and self-assured. He may well be so, seeing that he has won through his lovely, tenuous talent, his improvisations with their enticing colouring, a world-wide reputation as a master. So he talked, with his quiet pleasant voice as one

*A visit to
the South*

*Return to
Paris*

whose interest was in the permanent values. I have observed that however far removed are their works from the great creations of the past, successful painters speak as though they stood for a similar completeness. And since Matisse has been compared to Tintoretto, Michelangelo and Leonardo, prosperity attends the ripe autumn of his life. Indeed, he has been wise enough to live soberly, to prefer work to dissipation, and has the reward that his more careless contemporaries, Toulouse-Lautrec and Conder, did not live to enjoy.

My son John, who in the spring of 1938 was appointed Director of the Tate Gallery, published that autumn a book on Charles Conder. It was curious to observe his reaction to the work and personality of one with whom I was so familiar. Although I gave him certain facts he required, I had not read the book until it appeared. I regretted that he paid slight attention to Conder's later canvases. Lovely as were his paintings on silk, his later canvases show a bold conception and an energy to which his silk paintings do not attain. It was his early oil painting which attracted Lautrec and Anquetin rather than his slighter fans, the fans which brought popularity to Conder in England. Conder, in his later mood, would have enjoyed certain qualities of Matisse's paintings, their colouring, their frank allure.

Matisse recognized Anquetin's great gifts; spoke warmly of his early pastels of women, but naturally cared less for his Rubens period—he tried to stop the clock; in vain, he said, for the hands went forward. It was pleasant to see Matisse and Bussy so happy in one another's company. Bussy told me that they meet every day, yet Matisse has never asked to see his, Bussy's, work! I was to visit Matisse at his studio. But my object in coming to the South was achieved, and anxious to get to Paris, I left Monte Carlo the next evening.

In Paris I stayed in a modest hotel in the rue de l'Université, a stone's throw from the rue de Beaune, where I first lived, fifty years ago, with Herbert Fisher, Kenneth Frazier, Arthur Studd and Ludwig von Hofmann. It was delightful to find this quiet quarter of Paris much as it was fifty years

earlier; I could almost imagine myself setting off again to the Académie Julian at the rue du Faubourg St Denis. I did, in fact, passing through the rue du Dragon, come upon Julian's school. But how different from the crowded, noisy, dirty, airless Julian's of the past! The present studios are clean and quiet as those at the Royal College, and by no means crowded. No one shouted at me as I went in; in fact I was received with extreme politeness.

The Quai Voltaire with its old furniture and book shops I found unchanged. Unchanged, too, was the front of the Hôtel du Quai Voltaire, where in 1897 I made a drawing of the dying Beardsley. Only the old Pont des Arts, with its iron railing, has been replaced by a new stone bridge.

I crossed each morning to the Louvre. Here I found many changes, though its long gallery was familiar. Other galleries were new to me, notably those in which are the Camondo and Caillebotte collections, and the room for the primitives, wherein now hang the Botticelli frescoes. I missed these from their old place at the top of one of the staircases; one used, before entering the galleries, to pay one's respect to these lovely paintings. The great El Greco Crucifixion came as a surprise; a splendid work of imagination and a superb example of painting. Here was an entirely new attitude to subject, form and colour—strange that it has taken so long for artists to discover El Greco's rare genius. What Cézanne took from him was but a little of his wealth—scarcely more than a surface appearance; his great conceptions Cézanne was not strong enough to steal or borrow. Only an equal can take wealth from a master, as Rubens took from Titian. Who again could borrow from Tintoretto's great painting of Heaven, with its swift rushing circling of figures? In vain we limit the genius of painting to our own small conceptions. The energy of great minds makes havoc of theories.

Then in the gallery where hang the paintings of Napoleon's time, I had to pay tribute to the genius of David. His *Sacre de Napoléon* is, to my mind, the most imposing com-

Aesthetic gesture position, the completest painting, carried through since the Venetians. There are superb qualities in the portraits of the Pope and the ecclesiastics about him, in the group of the plumed courtiers, and, surely, the figures at the back of the composition show eminent painter-like qualities. Again I felt the perfection of Millet's *Printemps* and the classical austerity of the *Glâneuses*. I am unashamed in regarding Millet as one of the greatest of French painters.

I noticed a head by Proudhon, beautifully painted, which I had forgotten. Indeed in the great gallery in which are the works of the later French painters, David, Ingres, Delacroix, Millet, Courbet, one gets a superb impression of the French genius. How happy would Whistler have been to know that the dignified portrait of his mother was to hang among these masterpieces.

As painting becomes more and more removed from subject matter, aesthetic gesture takes the place of the equipment once deemed necessary for a painter. To-day a mere gesture, a flourish towards an end, is considered, by many, sufficient; as though one should set out, with rucksack on back, for Land's End and, walking to Paddington Station, return home. There is an account in Huysmans' *A Rebours* wherein des Esseintes, having packed his trunks and taken his ticket for London, dines at an English tavern in Paris. There he breathes the peculiar atmosphere he recognizes to be that of London, and remains in Paris.

Even Rodin, for all his genius, failed to bring his *Porte de l'Enfer*, on which he had laboured for so many years, to a satisfactory conclusion; the ease with which the earlier sculptors composed their groups failed him. I saw the *Porte* again at the Musée Rodin, at the Hôtel Biron, about which there had been so much hesitation and discord before the Government decided to accept Rodin's splendid gift. But Rodin was a difficult person to deal with. I was reminded of this when, loitering along the quays where the books are displayed, I happened to come upon the letters of Rilke to Rodin, which I bought for a few francs. I had known Rilke,

not as a poet but as Rodin's secretary. When I took up the book to read these letters which displayed Rilke's somewhat embarrassing adulation of Rodin, I suddenly came upon a reference to myself. I was surprised to find that a letter Rilke had written to me, to which I sent a reply, was a source of grievance to Rodin, and was in part the cause of Rilke's dismissal from Rodin's establishment. Evidently Rodin couldn't allow that his secretary should enter into personal relations with his friends.

'La lettre de M. Rothenstein', wrote Rilke, 'était la réponse à une lettre purement personnelle que je lui ai adressée; c'était (je dois vous rappeler) comme votre ami que vous m'avez présenté à M. Rothenstein, et je n'ai pu voir aucun inconvénient à accepter la petite relation personnelle qui s'établit entre votre ami et moi à travers nos conversations, d'autant plus, que des amis très chers, nous étaient communs.'

From Rilke's defence of himself it appears that Rodin resented his doing anything but attend to his, Rodin's immediate affairs; with the result, as poor Rilke says: 'Me voilà chassé comme un domestique voleur, à l'imprévu, de la petite maison où, jadis, votre amitié m'installait doucement.' I can only conclude that there were previous misunderstandings and that Rodin took any opportunity that presented itself to get rid of Rilke.

I had seen busts by Despiau, sensitively modelled and distinguished in style, and I went with keen anticipation to his studio. His portrait heads show a certain dry passion, have breadth and charm; but his figures lack the fullness and vigour of Rodin's. As I left Despiau I thought of the unfortunate effects of the museum upon sculpture. All over Paris, in public squares and gardens are graceful figures and joyous groups; even though they may possess no aesthetic qualities, one is content that they should add to the charm and gaiety of the scene. But the figures and busts, placed against the walls at the Luxembourg Gallery, appear mannered and purposeless. Some of the sculpture at the Tate Gallery would

Mont- likewise be better seen amidst the greenery of our London
martre parks and squares.
revisited

In Paris I was glad to get into touch with old friends and acquaintances, with Bonnard and Vuillard, whom I had not seen for many years. Of the two, Bonnard was the less changed, slender still, with a youthful figure and alert manner. I found him experimenting with pure colours, paying little attention to form or values. He was, I felt, attempting to make colour alone express more than it can carry. Vuillard, who builds up his compositions from slight drawings, remains more interested in appearance than Bonnard. Vuillard has a fine head, with gentle, kindly eyes. I made a drawing of him after two attempts at getting him to sit; each time I went to his studio for the purpose, I found he had made a subsequent engagement, but the third time he kept himself free. Valéry also was to sit, but was still more elusive.

Vuillard and I began our careers at the same time, making drawings for Coquelin Cadet. He spoke of Cadet's friendliness and good nature, a pleasanter man altogether than his famous brother. I reminded him of how Coquelin Aîné exchanged a fine work by Degas for a painting by Dagnan Bouveret! Dagnan, now forgotten like so many others then famous. I spoke of my undiminished regard for Puvis de Chavannes, whom Lautrec placed, together with Degas, above all his contemporaries. Vuillard was glad, he said, to hear someone do justice to that great man; for in France to-day few now speak of him.

It was not far from Vuillard's studio at Montmartre (in the Place Vintimille) that Puvis had his studio; it was on the Place Pigalle, and I remembered his venerable figure when he received visitors in the early morning, in his dressing gown, before going to his atelier at Neuilly, and, again, the same figure, frock-coated, at the Besnard's hôtel in the rue Guillaume Tell. Besnard was then one of our heroes, of whose mural paintings at the Ecole de Pharmacie my friend Ludwig von Hofmann made copies.

I climbed up the rue Lepic to my old studio in the rue

Ravignan, where Conder, and later Picasso, also lived, and found the quarter much as it was fifty years ago. Each street in Montmartre brought back memories: of Degas in the rue Victor Massé, and my excitement each time I went to be admitted to his apartment. In the rue Caulaincourt lived Toulouse-Lautrec, then looked on as an eccentric and wrong-headed painter of unsavoury subjects, now regarded as a master. Nearby, in the rue Houdon, was a little restaurant frequented by Steinlen and Léandre, Léandre who began his career as a caricaturist by making *charges* of all of us. Later he gave up painting and had a successful career drawing for *Le Rire*. When we could afford it we lunched and supped at the Rat Mort or the Abbaye de Thelème, once famous as rendezvous for the Montmartre artists and courtesans. On the Place Blanche the sails of the Moulin Rouge still turn; but Valentin and la Goulue, Rayon d'Or and Nini Pattes-en-l'air, la Môme Fromage and Jeanne Avril dance only in the memories of a few survivors—Edouard Dujardin, George Moore's friend is one of them—of that uneasy, hectic circle of artist-noceurs. I recollected, too, how Conder, sitting with Germaine at the café de la Rochefoucauld where Degas often came to lunch or dine, spoke of the shame he felt for the slightness of his art when he looked across at Degas, sitting austere alone.

From the rue de l'Université, on the other side of the river, I could walk into the rue du Bac and see again, in recollection, Whistler's little Empire house, with its apple-green door, its dining room full of old silver and Long Elizas, Whistler himself delicately holding a copper plate, touching it with his needle while he talked. There Mallarmé would come, and Helleu, Montesquiou de Fezensac and the Spaniard Gandara to pay homage to the Master. It was there I first met Walter Sickert. Nearby, in the rue des Beaux-Arts, Fantin had his studio, where his *Hommage à Delacroix*, now in the Louvre, used to hang, surrounded by unframed copies and studies made during the course of his long life; Fantin in baggy clothes and list slippers, with a shade over his eyes,

*Meeting
old friends*

half French bourgeois, half Kalmuck. And there were the nights spent at Montparnasse, at the café François Premier, where Verlaine sat with Cazals, and at the café d'Harcourt, with Stuart Merrill, Jean Moréas and Raymond de la Tailhède, all now departed. I retired early to my hotel, for the cosmopolitan crowds on the Boulevard St Michel had no attraction for me.

I went, too, to the rue Lafitte and the rue le Pelletier, to see what Durand-Ruel and Vollard were now showing. But I went in vain, for the picture dealers have now trekked to the rue de la Boétie. There, instead of the stacks of canvases by Manet, Renoir, Monet, Sisley, Pissarro, Degas and Puvis de Chavannes, I saw sparse studies shown in rich frames, shown as a diamond-merchant displays his precious stones.

I thought to myself: this century is just on forty years old. Take any forty years of the nineteenth century, from 1800 to 1840 or from 1840 to 1880: and I reflected that my twentieth-century contemporaries in France can be no prouder of their output than we in England are of ours.

But in the wit, fine taste and intelligence of the minor arts the French are still supreme. I saw many examples of these qualities in the exhibition of the *Ballets Russes*. There was a large scenic-painting by Picasso, representing a fantastic concert party, which I thought delightful. Here I felt was the true Picasso, showing large joyous shapes and colours, redolent of the spirit of the theatre, wherein was nothing to be solemn about, as people are solemn over his abstract designs. And how bored I was at a show of abstract paintings by Braque, held at Rosenberg's gallery, before which young women were sitting as though drugged.

Both Bonnard and Vuillard regretted the power of the dealers, of their exploitation of certain artists, to their detriment, and attribute much of the present decline in painting to the very limited powers needed to achieve success, and notoriety. Paris, too, since the war, has been invaded by a horde of scavengers from east and west, hoping to glean from the leavings of the Paris studios. I suppose if an age

lacks great men it has to invent them, and to men of small stature are attributed the qualities of men of genius. Nor was André Gide, when I met him, happy about contemporary letters in France. Gide looked stronger, more robust in face and figure, than when he stayed with us at Oakridge twenty years earlier. Oddly enough he was wearing clothes, loosely cut and of the light brown colour, such as he then wore; and perhaps this helped the illusion that twenty years had not passed, that we were neither of us older, while the feelings of friendship which existed between us had not diminished. Gide was no less mentally alert, no less curious about life and letters. He asked what was being done in the way of good writing in England, spoke with admiration of Bennett's *Old Wives' Tale*, 'one of the great books of our time,' he said, 'yet for some reason not appreciated in France.' Gide had lately been reading Mark Rutherford, in his opinion a writer of genius. I asked him about his younger contemporaries: he recommended me to read *Le Mur* by Sartre. I read *Le Mur*, a powerful book enough, but I should not like to think it the best that can be done by the present generation.

Gide shares my high opinion of Simon Bussy's work, too seldom acknowledged by critics and collectors. He spoke with affection of Jacques Blanche, but now sees little of him; political differences keep them apart.

I found Blanche looking thinner than when I last saw him in London, depressed, too, at the international tension, fearing for the safety of Paris, and incidentally, of his own household and effects. But he has lost little of his vitality. New paintings on easels, or leaning against the walls of his studio, bear witness to his industry. It is usual to speak lightly of Blanche as a painter. But looking at the many works on his walls, I was impressed by his painter-like qualities, as portraitist especially; the best of his canvases have distinction and character. And what a fine intelligence, what a civilized culture is Blanche's! I know of no one equipped with a more discriminating sense of good painting, of good literature. He has, too, the copiousness of the artist-horn,

and though he has led the life of a man of the world, has travelled much and written many books, his output is immense. He insisted upon my sitting to him for a portrait. There came from him, as he worked, a flow of talk, which did not appear to affect his concentration. In an hour he produced a brilliant study, which he completed in a second sitting. This he insisted on my carrying away. In addition he gave me an early work, a girl's head, painted in 1881 in Gervex's studio, in front of Degas. It was no small compliment that Degas, later in his life, should have asked Blanche to paint his portrait. Blanche can use a bitter tongue and has, in consequence, many enemies. But his generous qualities are too commonly disregarded. I was glad to hear Vuillard speak warmly of Blanche. So, too, did my friends the Noufflards. In Mme Noufflard's studio (she had been one of Blanche's pupils) I saw some delicate interiors and excellent portrait studies, among others one of Vernon Lee. At the Noufflards' flat I met Henri Rivière, whose *Marche à l'Etoile* enchanted me in my early Paris days at the *Chat Noir*.

Blanche complains bitterly of the treatment he receives from the Ministère des Beaux-Arts. Paintings, acquired and presented to public institutions, to the Hotel de Ville, for instance, have been removed to the basement. He receives no public commissions, scarcely any private ones. But what can one expect, he explains, seeing the anarchy which exists in France to-day, the lack of good taste, the decay of all values? I reminded him that at least he had been made a member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France.

Well, there was useful work to be done there. There were ample funds to be administered. Of course he was pleased to be a *membre de l'Institut*. I met him there one afternoon and was taken over the building by the kindly librarian, Marcel Bouteron, who showed me where the members of the various sections, including that of the Académie Française, hold their meetings. What a sense of tradition one feels throughout! Small wonder that Frenchmen of letters and artists desire to be Academicians! No doubt a Frenchman, received at Bur-

lington House, with its fine rooms hung with paintings by Hogarth and Reynolds, would be impressed by the Royal Academy, more especially after the close of the summer exhibition. Yet I do not hold contemporary painting in England to be inferior to that of France. I was, indeed, shocked at the paintings at the Luxembourg Gallery, and saw nothing there to compare with the best of Steer's or of John's paintings at the Tate, nor did I find any imaginative work to stand beside that of Stanley Spencer. But Blanche explained that in recommending paintings for the Luxembourg there is much political pressure; and for politicians, French and English, he has little good to say.

'We should go back to 1918, my dear Will. Britain, always believing in the Balance of Power, made a false estimate of Germany's mentality, of France's bellicose policy, of her military forces. Germany had been steadily rearming since 1919, admirably preparing for a next successful invasion, while the French, too ready to believe in disarmament, let themselves get weaker and weaker, and Marxists and Radical-Socialists did all they could to break down the resistance of the people. The League of Nations, our Briand's creed of pacifism (peace established by talk), British dislike of compulsory service, led to all democracies wavering. Why did England stop the French mobilizing when Hitler's troops reoccupied the Right Bank of the Rhine? It's too late now!! Why did England help to bring about the downfall of Laval, the only statesman we have had for fifty years? thus separating the two Latin sisters. Why did England encourage the forming of a Popular Front, the disastrous Blum Cabinets, all Marxist revolutionary enterprises, leading to strikes and attacks on the Army? Within two years and a half the ghastly ideology of the Marxists was well on the way to upsetting the inner structure of our social, economic and intellectual activities; had ruined the nation, metamorphosed a hard working people into idlers and shirkers. They sent arms and munitions (under the masked war of non-inter-

*England's
offences*

vention, M. Blum's scheme!) to the anarchists of Spain, collaborating with Moscow, when we all knew that the Reds would be beaten in the long run. The incredible lack of foresight amongst our politicians was shared by your *New Statesman* dreamers. Hence the latest consequences: reinforcement of the Rome-Berlin axis.'

I reminded Blanche that we have other organs of enlightened opinion besides *The New Statesman*. Does he read the wise articles which J. A. Spender is writing for the *Sunday Times*, for example? For myself, I had been struck by the quiet courage of the Frenchmen I had been meeting, by their faith in the moral position of the democracies and in the resoluteness of their army. Yes, Blanche agreed, France has still an excellent army. But there is as yet no question of compulsory service in England. He too believed in the toughness and tenacity of the French and British; but he confessed that some time ago he wondered whether Mr. Chamberlain would act as Brunhilde, and leap, together with Daladier, on to the funeral pyre: the nymphs of the Seine, the mermaids of the Thames, in place of the Rhine daughters lamenting! Now he admitted that a stand was being made against further aggression by the Axis Powers. A move towards compulsory service was in fact started immediately after our return from France.

I could understand Blanche's feeling, that in case of war France would have to bear the full brunt of the first attack. We can only live from day to day; meanwhile the unending fertility of the spring brings courage. For nothing can prevent the sap from rising, or the miracle of the full-leaved, blossoming trees after the bare winter. It is poor comfort, I know. But life with its unlimited fecundity pulsating throughout the universe urges and controls more than any human agency. You and I are old, dear Blanche, but the young are full of vigour; even the old remember their desires. Yeats's last poem suggested that he would give everything

for the power to bring once more fulfilment to a young woman. Our fears fill but a small proportion of each day: our small satisfactions and disappointments, above all our vanity, are with us to the very end. You are pleased to have done a brilliant piece of painting and I am relieved to look a fairly intelligent and not too repugnant a person in your portrait.

And I bade farewell to my old friend; and though I believe he had enjoyed my visits, and regretted my leaving, he was impatient that I lingered while the taxi was ticking outside the gate. So, I recollected, my old father used to be, when I paid one of my brief visits to Bradford, until I was on my way to the station, in good time to catch the train back to London.

CHAPTER XXXVII

APPEARANCE AND REALITY

*A visit to
Bath*

SOON after returning from France I heard that the Walter Sickerts had taken a house at Bath, some thirty miles from our cottage. We found them living in a large mansion, with four acres of garden, the sort of house, early Victorian, that suited Walter. He had a fine large room for a studio, his wife a smaller one. There were Italian subjects, squared out with broad black lines in charcoal, on which he had been working; in the hall were the prints from which he had taken the subjects; rare prints, he said, so the originals would be little known. He was now using only black, grey and white, with a little yellow ochre. On his chimney piece were delightful casts of grotesque portrait-figures from the time of Louis Philippe by Danton le jeune, rich and fat in their quality of modelling, and throughout the house were amusing Regency and Victorian prints. A large portrait of himself in doctor's robes, by Mrs Sickert, hung in his painting room; he is proud of being a Doctor of Letters, as he was of being the only English foreign member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts of the Institut de France.

We sat down to lunch and gossiped of old days, he with his rich experience of past painters and actors. He had seen Charles Kean, and described how, in playing a Shakespearian part, he made coughing sounds before speaking. He spoke admiringly of Marion Terry, of her acting which was more finished than that of her more famous sister, Ellen. And he turned to the paintings by his father on the walls of his dining room, speaking with reverence of his careful, accom-

plished methods. For others he had not much reverence; certainly not for his one-time fellow academicians: 'That dreadful Academy on its dunghill!' 'No, Walter,' I interposed, 'not on anything so fertile!'

But it was beautiful to witness the courtesy and respect he showed his wife. True, he suggested, that any man who had had as many wives as he, should have drowned one at least—there was, of course, still time.

During the luncheon we learned it was Walter's birthday—his seventy-ninth—and, drinking his health in good Burgundy, I mentioned it was also my wife's. And he reminded us of how he had met us at Dieppe at the beginning of our honeymoon, to take us to Lefevre's hotel where he had engaged rooms. Walter still had on the bright orange clothes he was wearing when I last saw him at the Leicester Galleries, with a black and red neckerchief round his throat instead of collar and tie, the same sailor's peaked cap worn at a tilt over his eyes when we went into the garden. As we descended to a summer house by way of some very steep and awkward steps, Walter went down them on his behind, my wife reminding him of Swinburne's method, when less sober than Sickert, of taking the stairs at Rossetti's house.

We sat overlooking the Kensington side of Bath; the most perfect city in England, we all agreed.

I had lately seen at Jacques Blanche's house, I told Walter, some lovely early paintings of Dieppe, and of the old Bedford music hall, where we often went together. Ah yes, he admitted the qualities of early work. But, he said, there was now no need to paint from nature, or even from memory: the camera made this needless. I am not of this opinion; nor do I think it substantiated by his later paintings. But this matter I have touched on in an earlier chapter.

But what a personality is Sickert's! no wonder he has fascinated, mesmerized his generation.

Sickert himself would scarcely expect the glamour of his personality to extend to another generation. He knows it has had its reward. He is too intelligent to wish to limit the art

*The ardour
of pursuit*

of painting to an individual outlook. He delights in the definition of the English and German illustrators of the first half of the nineteenth century. And I have heard him grow eloquent on the subject of Sir Edward Poynter!

There is a love common to poets and painters in England for the exquisite detail as well as for the broad aspects of nature. Indeed we meet with this happy combination in the most painter-like artists. Rembrandt, Rubens, Titian, Veronese embody in their great compositions objects both large and small.

In fact there exists no smallness of form; size is relative to our senses and our organs of sight are insufficient for a great part of the objective world. I saw, during a demonstration at the Society of Arts, astonishing enlargements from minute particles of crystal which discovered themselves as impenetrable forests of tree-like growth and undergrowth. A living body, a tree, each is a universe containing a complexity of life beyond our perceptions. To represent something of the exquisite detail and the large nobility of form apparent to our limited senses seems to me no unworthy aim. It has been for me to paint as it were in prose; at least, I have tried to give to my prose something of dignity, even something of ecstasy. The ecstasy of poetry has been for others more gifted. Yet it is in the atmosphere of poetry and among men of large vision and magnanimous natures that I have been most happy and comfortable.

The worth and worthlessness of praise I know; praise has been given to that which has not deserved it and dispraise to things not unworthy of respect. It is not that one is vain about anything achieved, but we measure our aims and performances with those of our contemporaries. I have spent too many unprofitable days making drawings with insufficient motive; have painted—how many canvases now rolled up!—too often for the sake of painting. Yet again, what I have seen has spurred me to concentration and effort. Sir Charles Holmes once complained: 'You aim to put too much into each canvas.' Yet the ardour of pursuit drives me on to



'AND YET AGAIN'

attempt the complexities and the final simplification of form. Above all, I want to live with and in my subject, to explore its structure, its changing and manifold beauties under every aspect of light. A sketch is a flirtation; I prefer a serious love-affair with each adventure in paint, to give myself to it to the point of exhaustion. A hint of weight and dignity does sometimes, I hope, get embodied in my handiwork. Did I not believe it, I could not attempt, year after year, to achieve something worth doing; and what a chance to be able to spend one's days in close contact with realities! Apparent realities only, that I know; yet again and again I have felt the most satisfying answer to the problems of existence to be that of mere superficial appearance. I enjoy this absorption in the appearance of things. If I have not passed on my enjoyment to others, I have failed. It was Blake, Blake the mystic and idealist, who said that all objective life is holy: 'The Infinite alone resides in Definite Determinate Identity. . . . For art and science cannot exist but in minutely organized particulars.'

There is something deep within us which, if not consciously aiming at perfection, is acutely aware of its absence. Small deficiencies of tact in others, egotism, self-assertion too nakedly displayed, meanness, untruthfulness, unattractive voice, coarseness of manners, affect us disagreeably. Who does not desire that his children shall be healthy, beautiful, and well-mannered? Do not parents irritate their children and children their parents by small shortcomings? And we are always looking for perfection in women, disappointed, when catching sight of attractive form and hair, to find the face wanting in beauty. But few are sensitive to perfections and imperfections in current art and literature; and those who are, are influenced by friendships, latent hostilities, by loyalties to groups and institutions.

The Kingdom of God is not only within us, but before our eyes. The visible world is the most incredible of all miracles; man's imagination, try as he will, conceives nothing

*A St
Martin's
summer* that surpasses it, and his visions of Heaven, or of Hell, are in fact based on the visible world. To the artist, poet and man of science, the usual is ever new, a source of wonder and inspiration. Indeed, there are common happenings which heighten the emotion of the least imaginative—the first coming of love, and the presence of death.

Nor, it seems, is there any waning of the desire to create. Scientific research continues, books are written, pictures are painted. Some hold that writers should not and cannot do otherwise than deal with the urgent matters which force themselves on our attention. Others believe that passing events merely colour, but do not affect, the form of the essential realities. For myself, it matters not whether an artist deal with social questions so long as he preserves his integrity, so long as he does not commit 'le trahison des clercs'. Moreover, if his work be trivial and ill done, his political views will be negligible.

One hears of the disillusionment of age. It is true, one has learned how difficult it is for men to rise above the horizon line of daily life; we know the shallows as we do the depths, and cease to expect more from men than they are able and ready to give. We become more indulgent towards common frailties, complain less since we expect less, and we are grateful for the exchange of decencies and kindnesses. I understand the Indian belief that men should spend their last years in quiet reflection. Yet the impulse to keep on to the end is a constant one, and hope is still strong that one may yet do something to justify one's later years.

There comes, too, a St Martin's summer of the affections, bringing an ecstasy no less—perhaps because unexpected—than that of the high summer of life. A graciousness is extended by women to older men. To men, in their later years, comes a more disinterested understanding of the qualities peculiar to women, an affection which is not subject to the violent reactions, the intermittent hatred, which accompany closer relations between the sexes. 'When I was young my mind was a grub, my body a butterfly; now, in my old age,

my body is a grub, my mind a butterfly,' said Yeats, as I drove back with him from Penns in the Rocks to London.

I wish in completing the final volume of *Men and Memories* to offer my warm thanks to those who have not only read my script and proofs but have also given me valuable material and helpful advice: to Max Beerbohm, D'Arcy Cresswell, Harriet and Ellis Roberts, John Sparrow, my daughter-in-law Elizabeth, my sons John and William Michael. My thanks are also due to James Stephens, who allowed me to quote one of his poems; I had similar permission from John Drinkwater and W. B. Yeats. To those of my friends who have sanctioned the use of their letters, letters which are likely to give permanent value to the three volumes, I cannot be sufficiently grateful. I have in addition to acknowledge the ready response on the part of Lady Cynthia Asquith and Peter Davies, Mrs Robert Bridges, the Hon. Edward Eliot, Philip Gosse, Laurence Housman, Malcolm MacDonald, C. D. Medley, A. F. Tschiffely and Mrs W. B. Yeats to use and quote from the letters of Lady Wemyss, Sir James Barrie, Robert Bridges, T. E. Lawrence, Sir Edmund Gosse, A. E. Housman, J. Ramsay MacDonald, George Moore, Cunninghame Graham, and W. B. Yeats. I have also to thank Mrs Robert Bridges for permission to reproduce the beautiful example of her husband's script. My acknowledgments are also due to Mr Richard Bennett, for permission to quote from a letter from *Arnold Bennett's Letters to his Nephew*, published by Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.; to Miss Elizabeth Jungmann for her help in transcribing the text; and to Miss Pamela Lovibond for her careful preparation of the Index.

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